

THE JUSTICE PARTY

A historical perspective
1916-37

Dr. P. Rajaraman



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Dr. Sir A. RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR



Dedicated to

Dr. Sir A. RAMASWAMI MUDALIAR
whose gracious memory is the
source of inspiration to me.



Foreword

In the annals of recent South Indian History the rise and development of the Justice Party is of great importance. Though it has been said that the Justice Party was essentially collaborative with the British while the Congress opposed the foreigner's regime, the fact is that the effect of both the Justice Party and the Congress in the Tamil region was to broaden the area of political discourse and participation. By the 1930s many elements of the Congress had become very conservative while some individuals in the Justice Party were very radical.

Dr. P. Rajaraman has chronicled the rise of the Justice Party with great skill and enterprise. He has used a wide variety of primary documents previously unused by the historians of the subject. Equally as important is the fact that it is the only work that I know which incorporates the large body of research which has been generated about the movement of that group of people variously defined as the "backward classes" or the 'non-Brahmans'. Dr. P. Rajaraman has read very widely and has embodied the results of his work to help us understand the nature not only of the Justice Party but of its place in South Indian history. His contribution is an important one and his work is to be appreciated for its scope and style.

Eugene F. Irshick

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Madras
April 1986

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I am also highly grateful to God Almighty for having given me the strength and energy to withstand the strain and stress in getting this book published in a neat and elegant manner.

ABBREVIATIONS

GO	: Government Order
MLC	: Member of the Legislative Council
NMML	: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NNR	: Native Newspaper Report
PMLC	: Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council.
RAMP	: Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency.
SILF	: The South Indian Liberal Federation
AICC	: All India Congress Committee
TNCC	: Tamil Nadu Congress Committee



Introduction

This book endeavours to elucidate the role of the Justice Party – the early phase of the Non-Brahmin movement – in the socio-political life of the people of the far south of the Peninsular India in its historical perspective. It traces out, infact, the history of the erstwhile Madras Presidency from 1916 to 1937. Therefore it is essentially a regional study hitherto much neglected and frequently misunderstood due to gross ignorance of facts and lack of enthusiasm to unearth fresh records and documents.

The year 1916 which forms singularly a landmark in South Indian history witnessed the emergence of two political movements viz., the Home Rule movement and the Non-Brahmin movement. The former brought the most “benighted” Presidency of Madras to the forefront of national politics when Mrs. Besant, an Irish theosophist launched her red-hot agitation for self-government from Adyar, a suburb of the metropolitan city of Madras. The latter engineered a ‘revolt of the masses’ against ‘the tyranny of caste’. Consequently a conspicuous transformation was seen among the people of the ‘so called’ lower *varna* of South India. The traditional meekness to which that they had been subjected to slowly disappeared. They were aroused from a calm pitiable sullenness by “the emerging elite” of the non-Brahmin communities who were politically articulate, socially viable and economically sound. Indeed they championed the cause of the teeming millions, and therefore for the first time “the drawers of water and the hewers of wood” asserted themselves against the intellectual oligarchy of the upper caste people namely the Brahmins who were considered ‘the Magyars of Madras Presidency’.

Though this theme had attracted the attention of many a western historian like Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. Eugene F. Irschick, Christopher John Baker, David Washbrook and

Marguerite Ross Barnett and indigenous scholars such as S. Saraswathi and K. Nambi Arooran, the history of Justice Party remained incomplete in one respect or other. Further some of the conclusions of those scholars needed either to be modified or supplemented or totally rejected in order to reconstruct the history of the Justice Party in its true perspective. Therefore an unbiased account of the rise and fall of Justice Party became a desideratum. Hence this monograph with fresh evidences and arguments. However the period of study is limited to the years from 1916 to 1937 i.e. from the formation of the Justice Party to its debacle in 1937 elections, in order to have an indepth knowledge of the subject.

With this end in view, this book has been written to explain how the Justice Party helped the non-Brahmins have the edge over the Brahmins not only in the public services and educational field, though slowly, but also in the formal politics of Madras Presidency by accepting the Montford Reforms and by implementing the diarchical constitution. Further it attempts to throw light on how it paved the way for the establishment of an egalitarian society by destroying the shackles of *Varnashrama Dharma*. Hence there is ample scope in this volume to find answers for any paradoxical question quite often posed about the Justice Party. It is needless to say that an analysis of the dynamics of the early phase of the Non-Brahmin movement attempted in this work adds new dimension to the contemporary history of South India.



CHAPTER I

Socio-political Conditions in Madras Presidency Between 1909 and 1919

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The year 1909 constitutes a significant landmark in the national as well as provincial politics of India. The British who had hitherto believed that the form of government best suited for India was despotism¹ changed their attitude and began to respond to the demand of the Indian National Congress for self-government. A number of factors contributed to the change in their attitude. The first blow to the vision of supremacy of Great Britain came in the triumph of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The revolutionary stirrings in China, the risings of the Young Turks in 1908-09 and the Persian Liberal movement encouraged radical agitation in India. The policies of Lord Curzon, especially his partition of Bengal (1905), excited a great deal of resentment and gave rise to the Swadeshi-cum-boycott movement. "The younger nationalists began to develop a Faust-like mood"². The 'mendicant policy' of the Moderates was condemned by the extremist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In the twenty-third session of the Congress which met at Surat in 1907 a rift arose between the Moderates and the Extremists over the election of the president

The former wanted Rash Behari Ghose to be elected the president, and the latter, Lala Lajpat Rai. Though the session ended in confusion, the split in the Congress became final.

The Moderates assembled at Allahabad on 18th and 19th April 1908 and drew up a constitution for the Congress, the objects of which were clearly stated therein. There was no change in the attitude of the Moderates towards the British Government. They still believed in the conventional method of seeking reforms through constitutional means.³ The loyal, moderate and non-racial character of the Congress was deliberately demonstrated by choosing Britons as its presidents. (e.g., George Yule, 1888 ; William Wedderburn, 1889, 1910 ; Alfred Webb, 1894 ; Henry Cotton, 1904). It was careful enough to exclude extremist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Tilak from becoming its president. However, the extremist nationalism made headway. In April 1908, which witnessed the drafting of a new constitution by the Moderates, "the bomb made its appearance on the Indian political scene". Vigorous propaganda in favour of Swaraj, boycott and Swadeshi movement was steadily carried on. The message of Swadeshim reached even the people of rural areas who hitherto remained aloof from politics. In fact an era of mass politics began. A kind of unrest had set in throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The response of the Madras Presidency, particularly Tamil Nadu, to the Swadeshi movement was tremendous. The champion of this movement in Tamil Nadu was V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, a lawyer of repute from Tuticorin, who has been extolled as the Tilak of South India.⁴ He started the Indian Steam Navigation Company, which competed with the British owned British Indian Steam Navigation Company in carrying passengers from Tuticorin to Colombo. It was a courageous deed to challenge the monopoly of the British. He was also instrumental in organising a strike in a British owned textile mill. In all his activities, he found an able lieutenant in Subramania Siva whose patriotic propaganda such as 'India is for the Indians and not for the foreigners', had not failed to attract the serious attention

of the British Government. Another notable extremist in Tamil Nadu was Kavi Subramania Bharathi. He made an impassioned appeal to the national spirit of the people through his poems.⁶ "His works", writes M. Varadarajan, "reveal the deep influence of Mazzini's writings."⁶ He did not hesitate to resign his Assistant Editorship of *Swadeshamitran*, run by G. Subramaniya Iyer, when he found that the moderate views of the paper did not suit his extremist tenor. Afterwards he started a new Tamil weekly, *India*, through the columns of which the fervour of extremism found lofty expression. The British Government found his writings seditious and wanted to prosecute him, but he escaped to Pondicherry, the French enclave, which served in those days as a political asylum for the Extremists of South India.

In the meantime Tinnevely turned out to be a storm centre of the political activities of the Extremists. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva celebrated the release of Bipin Chandra Pal from prison, by organising a public meeting on 9th March 1908 for which permission was denied. Ignoring the warning of the District Magistrate, both Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva addressed public meetings at various places. Consequently they were arrested on 12th March 1908. The people of Tinnevely and Tuticorin reacted not only violently but swiftly. Even the students of that area organised a hartal condemning the arrest of those leaders. As a corollary, a serious riot broke out in Tinnevely. Almost every public building in the town was attacked. The furniture and records in these buildings were set on fire. The Municipal office was gutted. The government used weapons of repression to quell the riots. Twenty-seven persons were convicted and sentenced for participation in the riot.⁷ A charge of sedition was levelled against both Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva. After a formal trial, they were sentenced to transportation for life but on appeal to the High Court, it was reduced to six years of rigorous imprisonment in 1908, which year proved to be a year of repression throughout the country. It was the year in which Tilak was sentenced to six years of imprisonment and sent to Mandalay, and Lajpat Rai was deported from Punjab.

But terrorism which went hand in hand with Swadeshi movement was not so widespread and intensive in Madras as in Bengal and Punjab. A single terrorist activity that occurred in Madras was the shooting of Ashe, the Collector of Tinnevely, by Vanchi Aiyar in a railway carriage at Maniyachi junction in the Tinnevely District for his part in trying to crush the Swadeshi movement. But Vanchi Aiyar committed suicide by shooting himself and thus escaped from British harassment. The repressive measures of the government drove some of the extremists underground and some others into exile into Pondicherry. Under the leadership of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai the Swadeshi movement gave a new turn to the freedom struggle in Tamil Nadu. The leaders of the movement used the vernacular as the medium of propaganda whereby they had a meaningful dialogue with the masses. Thus the Swadeshi movement which brought forth a change in the character of the national movement took politics to the market place.⁸ However, it did not affect the prevailing faith in constitutionalism. Even the last years of V. O. Chidambaram Pillai reveal that he had lost faith in extremist philosophy. Even in Andhra there was not much terroristic activity—perhaps due to the domination of the Moderates. With the annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911) terrorism almost disappeared from the political scene of India.

The contention of Washbrook that “between 1895 and 1916, scarcely a single anti-British dog barked on the streets of Madras Presidency” is far from truth. The very fact that the Indian National Congress held its annual session at Madras⁹ six times before 1915 disproves his contention.

Morley, the then Secretary of State for India, was convinced that “conciliation, not repression was a right policy to be pursued.”¹⁰ He was determined to adjust the machinery of Indian Government to meet the ‘very modest and reasonable demands’ of the Indian National Congress. It is to be noted here that he often consulted Gokhale in bringing about reforms.¹¹ Minto, the then Governor-General had not failed to recognise the significance of the so-called ‘unrest’ in India. In fact, he discerned

the new spirit which was "the inevitable result of English education, English ideals of democracy, of the Japanese victory over Russia, and of the changing conditions in outer world."¹³ He frankly and publicly admitted that "new aspirations were stirring in the hearts of the (Indian) people, that they were part of a large movement, common to the whole East and that it was necessary to satisfy them to a reasonable extent by giving them a large share in the administration."¹³

Despite their wide differences in outlook, Morley and Minto agreed that "the Government of India was always to remain autocratic and sovereignty must be vested in British hands and could not be delegated to any kind of representative assembly in India." They were scornful of the demands of the Indian National Congress for establishing parliamentary government in India. Such demands, Morley described in the House of Commons, as a 'gross and dangerous sophism.'¹⁴ However, they attempted to introduce 'a scheme of administrative improvement' to secure the support of the moderate elements in Indian society with a view to strengthening the hold of British Government. The Act of 1909 was thus enacted mainly due to the initiative of Morley who did much to improve the original scheme of reforms proposed by the Government of India in March 1907. It was indeed a mild dose of reform by which the Government secured the co-operation of the Moderates.

The news that the 'reforms' were on the anvil, urged the Muslims on to action. A deputation consisting of thirty-five prominent Muslims drawn from different provinces and led by His Highness the Aga Khan, waited on the Viceroy at Simla and it made two important demands on behalf of the Muslim community. "First, in all elections, whether for the Legislative Councils or for local bodies, the Moslems must be separately represented and their representatives separately elected by purely Moslem electors. Second, the extent of the Moslem community's representation must be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength, but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire."¹⁵

In spite of Morley's hesitation to concede the demands of the Muslims, the viceroy insisted that separate electorates alone could satisfy the Muslims of India and nothing else. At last provision was made in the Act of 1909 for separate electorates for the Muslims.

This measure in fact reversed the unifying and amalgamating forces in the country. Thus communal representation had become a political theme for other minority groups such as Sikhs in Punjab. The example of the Muslims was also followed by the non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency who demanded communal representation as a protection against the preponderance of Brahmins in administration in spite of their numerical inferiority when a new instalment of 'reforms' was announced as early as 1917.¹⁶

The Indian Councils Act of 1909, otherwise known as the Minto-Morley reforms was mainly an extension of the Act of 1892. It provided for the increase in the strength of the legislative councils in the provinces with non-official majority. The strength of the Central Legislative Council was also increased but here an official majority was retained. The principle of election which remained latent in the Act of 1892 was openly recognised. The members of the councils were allowed to move resolutions, and to discuss the budget and even to call for a division. The right of interpolation was extended and members were permitted to ask supplementary questions. The special feature of this Act, as stated above, was the granting of communal representation to the Muslims. An Indian member was appointed to the Viceroy's executive council and similarly to the Governor's executive council of both Bombay and Madras Presidencies. This measure was "the first open attack on the monopoly of the Civil services."¹⁷ The first person appointed to the Viceroy's executive council was S. P. Sinha, a Bengal Barrister and a Congressman. Similarly, the Maharajah of Bobbili was appointed to the Madras Governor's executive council as per the Act of 1909.

The Congress welcomed the reforms as a fairly liberal measure and regarded them as an advance towards parliamentary government, despite Morley's denial in the House of Lords that a parliamentary system was a goal for which he did not aspire. However, there were "unmistakable tokens of appreciation and of a sense of relief from every part of the country." A public meeting was organised under the presidentship of the Prince of Arcot to thank Lord Morley for the reforms. Dr. T. M. Nair, the future progenitor of the non-Brahmin movement, moved the main resolution.¹⁸ There was every reason for the Muslims to feel satisfied with the reforms as they provided them with separate electorates. Morley's service to India was commendable. If India remained comparatively tranquil for a while it was largely due to the Reforms of 1909. In fact Morley did yet another favour by choosing as his Under-secretary another Cambridge man, E. S. Montagu, who understood the aspirations of the Indian nationalists. When an opportune moment came, Montagu boldly put India on the path of democratic self-government within the Empire. "India has reason to feel grateful to Morley more for the men than for the reforms he introduced."¹⁹

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The Emergence of a New Society

At the beginning of this century, a significant transformation took place in the social life of the people of India. A serious attempt had been made to purge the age-long ills and anomalies in the society. This change had been felt throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. It was due to several factors, both foreign and native.

The most popular terminology for the changes brought about in the Eastern countries by contact either indirect or direct with the western nations is 'westernisation or modernisation'. Daniel Lerner who prefers the term modernisation to westernisation defines it as "a disquieting positive spirit touching public institutions as well as private aspirations."²⁰ The term 'modernisation' carries different meanings. Julian Steward has explained

it as the socio-cultural transformation that results from factors and processes that are distinctive of the contemporary 'industrial world.'²¹ This transformation was obviously due to the introduction of English education. It was the channel through which western knowledge and values were introduced into India. It also stimulated the scientific study of Indian languages. English scholars, with the help and aid of Indian *pundits*, compiled grammars and dictionaries in these languages.

The birth of prose literature in Indian languages was one of the beneficial results of the contacts with English literature.²² For a long time literary field was dominated by poetry. Now it was taken by prose which served as a powerful vehicle of thought and expression. The new ideas, absorbed through English language, changed the whole intellectual climate of the country. Thus the new educational system introduced by the English became a formidable agent of westernising influences. Thus the Tennysonian dictum 'old order changeth yielding place to new' found its expression in this transformation.

One of the far-reaching results of the prolonged contact with the west was the emergence of a westernised class which Percival Spear calls, the middle class. There was a marked difference between the old middle class of India and the new one. The former played a very subordinate role in the affairs of India. "It was divided by distance, by language, by caste feeling and by occupation. It had no common consciousness and was dependant everywhere on the intellectual aristocracy of the Brahmans and the landed aristocracy of Sardars and Zamindars.... Each profession or vocation was insulated from others by walls of custom and prejudice."²³ The first group of people who benefited much by the western education were the merchants and financiers at the seats of British power. They put their talents at the service of the new ruler. Nandkumar and Anandarangam Pillai and Pachaiyappa Mudaliar were the most illustrious examples of this category of people.

M. N. Srinivas designates this westernised group as 'the New Elite'. It included university students and teachers, barristers and lawyers, writers and newspaper editors, educated proprietors and well-to-do traders.²⁴ It is in fact the cream of the intelligentsia of the society. That was the reason why Lord Dufferin called this 'a microscopic minority'. It is really distressing to note that only six per cent of the total population of India were literates ; of these only less than one per cent had any knowledge of English. The number of Indians educated in English in the last decades of the previous century was hardly 500,000. In relation to the teeming millions of the country they were undoubtedly 'a microscopic minority' but a dynamic minority. "As a rising group, concentrated mostly in the towns, imbued with common ideas and aspirations, controlling the professions, educational institutions and newspapers, and capable of concerted action, English educated Indians wielded an influence in society which was out of proportion to their numerical strength."²⁵

The lawyers were in the forefront of the newly emerging society. Their legal education moulded their social ideas. "The Rule of Law was to them the basis of all society." The reforms of Lord Ripon had established a system of elected local self-government in India as early as 1882-83. They served as "instruments for political and popular education rather than as the means for increased efficiency". This in fact was the first political opening to the ambitions of the New Elite who received a very valuable training in local administration. The outstanding leaders of the Indian National Congress such as Phiroze Shah Mehta, C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, as well as Dr. T. M. Nair and Theagaraya Chetti, the founders of the Justice Party had their first administrative experience in the municipalities of their respective areas. The reform of Lord Ripon gave the New Elite a sphere to prove their administrative talents.²⁶

The Composition of the New Elite

The New Elite cut through all the castes from the highest Brahmin to the lowest Pariah. The intellectual leaders of this

class came from all sections irrespective of their positions in the hierarchy of caste. Nonetheless, a good percentage of them were high caste Brahmins. However, they "foreswore caste and accepted the need of equality." Keshab Chandra Sen, the prophet of the Brahmo Samaj, Vivekananda, the champion of new Hinduism, Aurobindo, the philosopher of new India, were all members of non-Brahmin castes while Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna and the Tagores were Brahmins who denounced the concept of caste. Even in the orthodox South, Dr. T. M. Nair, the leader of the social democratic movement, Sankaran Nair and Theagaraya Chetti rose to political eminence as "doughty fighters against caste".⁹⁷ Thus the emergence of the elite class contributed much to the breakdown of the system of caste. However, it is generally assumed that the New Elite had drawn disproportionately from the Brahmin caste of the population.

Writers like Edward Shils, B. B. Misra and Selig S. Harrison hold the view that "Brahmins with modern education served the British in the civil service. For a long time the Madras and Bengali Brahmins led the way in the service of the British and they were predominant among the Indians in the Indian Civil Services."⁹⁸ Even the political field was dominated by the Brahmins. Hence the castes which were below the Brahmins ventured to mobilise themselves and started a movement demanding a fair share in the new opportunities. To quote M. N. Srinivas "The Backward class movement everywhere went with a certain amount of anti-Brahminism." Thus the westernisation which created a new class, a class of New Elite, gave birth not only to positive forces like nationalism but also to negative forces such as communalism, casteism and regionalism.

The Caste Structure

The composite state of Madras was a home of conservatism and orthodoxy where caste had taken deep root and its ramifications were numerous. Each caste widely differed from another both in the mode of dress and in the way of life. "The higher caste zealously preserved their traditional styles of life even to the extent of cooking or serving food in a particular manner."⁹⁹

The modern political development had divided the Hindus of the peninsular India into three groups ; the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the untouchables.

The Brahmins

(The Brahmins, the highest caste in Hindu social hierarchy, occupied an eminent position in cis-Vindyan society. " Though only a small segment of the population, they have had a decisive say in all aspects of life and have been in the forefront in many spheres. Their contribution to the heritage of India has not been doubted but they have also been guilty of perpetuating an inequitous social order."³⁰)

The separate residential area of a village where they lived was known as '*agraharam*'. They had remained exclusive from others by 'distinctive patterns of speech, dress and diet.' They were extremely orthodox and religious minded. Their orthodoxy had found a profound expression in the mode of life they had been leading. A feeling of superiority always dwelt in them. Abbe J. A. Dubois gives a penpicture of a Brahmin's attitude in life. "The Brahmin's superiority is inherent in himself and it remains intact, no matter that his condition in life may be rich or poor, unfortunate or prosperous, he always goes on the principle engrained in him that he is the most noble, the most excellent and the most perfect of all created beings, that all the rest of mankind are infinitely beneath him and that there is nothing in the world so sublime or so admirable as his customs and practices."³¹ (The feeling of superiority was due to their dominance over other castes who were almost in a position of total subservience.) Though they were divided into a number of endogamous groups and were unevenly distributed over the peninsula, (the Brahmins were able to assert their supremacy because of their ritual status, their ownership of land and their control of some of the top and key administrative positions in rural society.³²)

As far as the Telugu region was concerned the '*Niyogi*' Brahmins who settled down largely in the northern circars were very influential and powerful. As the landowners of the best

arable land in the area and also as Karnams (Village Accountants) they were able to sustain their power over many centuries, thereby providing continuous leadership in the northern circars. Desastha, the Maratha Brahmins, who gained power in the early years of the 18th century monopolised the district administration, especially in Guntur district. "The small Desastha clique were able to have things their own way in the district headquarters."³³

In the Tamil speaking area, the Brahmins maintained their high ritual status while increasing their social and economic power. They were of two categories namely Smarthas (Aiyars) and Sri Vaishnavas (Iyengars). The Smarthas were the followers of Sankaracharya (Advaitas) whereas the Sri Vaishnavas considered themselves the disciples and followers of Ramanuja (Vishistathvaitas). It is significant to note here that the Brahmins did not worship the *Grama Devatha* or village gods. They were very much concentrated in the Cauvery delta. Among Tamil Brahmins there were occupational groups : the Vedic Brahmins, domestic priests and temple priests. The Vedic Brahmins enjoyed the highest status. They had a tradition of learning and cultural activities and lived on the revenues granted by ruling princes and other Hindu philanthropists. (In a society which has been very much ordered by religious faith and beliefs and traditional customs, they were recognised as the regulators of religious life and social interactions.³⁴) They could do no wrong and their words were the law. The other groups occupied a lesser position and served as *purohits* and priests for family and domestic functions such as weddings.

Nearly half of the Tamil Brahmins lived in the three districts of Tanjore, Trichinopoly and Tinnevely 'where they possessed an unquestioned pre-eminence.' Of the three, Tanjore was considered to be the citadel of Brahmin community. The city proper was a great centre of Brahminical learning. F. R. Hemingway, the editor of the Tanjore Gazetteer, gives a clear account of the position of the Brahmins. "Brahmins versed in the sacred law are numerous in Tanjore ; Vedic sacrifices are performed on the banks of its streams; Vedic chanting is performed in a manner rarely rivalled ; philosophical treatises are published in Sanskrit

verse.”³⁵ Their spiritualism had not in any way hindered their material prosperity. “Many of them had been *mirasdars*, the traditional large landholders, and they divided their lands into lots cultivated at rack-rents by tenants.”³⁶ But they were not humble peasants. The Tamil Brahmins, especially Iyengars, were conspicuous for their ambition and adaptability ; they were like ‘the chitpavans of Maharashtra’. *The Manual of the District of Tanjore* notes that “there is hardly a pursuit literary, industrial or professional to which they do not apply themselves with remarkable success.”³⁷

In Malabar, the Nambudiris, the most conservative of the Brahmin caste, were at the apex of the society. As their social and economic position was secure, they were not eager to take up administrative services. None the less, the youth of this community were dissatisfied with their traditional status. In the year 1908, therefore, a few members of leading South Malabar Nambudiri families organised a Sabha called ‘Nambudiri Yogakshema’ to discuss the ways and means to alter the educational policy of the community. As early as 1917 this Sabha presented a petition to the Government of Fort St. George to establish English medium schools so as to enable them to rise up to the level of the Nairs and other castes who had responded to western education at an early date.³⁸

The Pattar Brahmins or Tamil Brahmins who settled in Travancore and Cochin more predominantly than in Malabar district, were exposed to English education earlier than any other community in Kerala. It gave them the advantage of securing government jobs in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin. They were “originally employed as tutors, temple managers, cooks and personal servants to the aristocratic and princely families of these states.”³⁹ The reorganisation of the administrative systems in the 19th century gave them a splendid opportunity to improve their fortunes. As a result, they became *mirasdars*, *munshis* (bench clerks) and accountants under the Maharajahs and in course of time they acquired landed property.⁴⁰ But the Pattar Brahmins who lived in South Malabar were mainly traders,

money-lenders and agriculturists. "Unlike the Nambudiris of Malabar district, the Pattar Brahmins of Travancore and Cochin looked down upon the Nayers and treated them as inferiors."⁴¹

Despite their dominant and privileged position as the elite of South India, the Brahmins suffered from certain social constraints imposed by the caste system. The greatest constraint which distinguished them from the rest of the Hindu society was that the Brahmins were debarred from tilling the soil. They might engage in agriculture, but must be like gentlemen farmers employing labourers for manual work.⁴² Their religious scriptures prevented them from doing manual work. As a result, their lands were either given for lease to non-Brahmin tenants or cultivated with the help of hired labourers, preferably people of Adi-Dravida communities. Even their involvement in trade and commerce was not welcomed by their fellow brothers. Because of these constraints, Brahmins without landed property or assured priestly income turned to secular vocations, more particularly to the services of the state.⁴³ Even the Brahmins who possessed lands, due to their westernisation left the *agraharams* in large numbers and entered schools, colleges and offices in different capacities.

The Non-Brahmins

(A great deal of ambiguity is attached to the term, 'non-Brahmins,' which in its broadest sense embraces all who are not Brahmins. This hyphenated word 'non-Brahmin' which denoted a major section of South Indian communities gained currency at the beginning of this century when the supremacy of the Brahmins was challenged by a group of elite who belonged to castes other than Brahmins. The group was very much heterogeneous in its composition. It consisted of an array of rajas, zamindars, industrialists, lawyers, and doctors.⁴⁴ The famous Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916 employed the term 'non-Brahmin' in its most inclusive sense to cover not only Muslims and Christians but also the 'Depressed Classes'⁴⁵ In short it was a cluster of castes, mostly agriculturists, who ranked below the Brahmins in social status but above the Depressed Classes.⁴⁶)

It is very difficult to enumerate here the various castes which constitute the group, the non-Brahmins. Nevertheless an attempt is made here to survey the major caste groups on vocational basis. *The Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, 1885, classified them into various categories of which the following are significant : (1) the trading castes ; (2) the cultivating castes ; (3) the artisan castes.

Trading Castes

The trading castes which formed nearly 3 per cent of the Hindu population were generally called Chettis. They often claimed the varna title of Vaisyas. They were located in places where trade and commerce flourished. Every town had a proportion of them. But in districts like South Kanara, where they were numerically very thin, the commercial pursuits were taken up by other caste people, mainly the Muslims.

There were numerous subdivisions among the Chettis. The census returns of 1881 mention as many as ninety different designations borne by the Chettis, the variations of which reflected the localities they inhabited. Of them, the most significant groups were (1) Nattukottai Chettis, (2) Beri Chettis, (3) Komati Chettis, and (4) Vaniya Chettis. Generally the trading castes professed Saivism but only the Komatis worshipped Vishnu. Some of them were Lingayats. However, they worshipped mainly the village deities. These castes had a sort of aversion for government service, civil or military, especially the latter.

The Nattu Kottai Chettis

The most outstanding among the Chettis was the Nattukottai Chetti group whose enterprising ability was indeed noteworthy. They carried on extensive seaborne trade for several centuries and amassed considerable wealth. It is a fact that they were one of the richest communities in South India. Besides, they were professional money-lenders for a long time and extended their activities over vast regions. Despite their frugal nature, they used to spend extravagantly on celebrations like marriage. Saivism was their sacred religion. They made endowments to Siva temples. The

most famous temples which received endowments from them were the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai and the Arunachaleswar temple at Tiruvannamalai. Between 1860 and 1914, the bankers of this community spent more than Rs. 1.82 crores on the restoration of the great temples.⁴⁷ Deviating from the traditional practice two famous Nattukottai brothers, Ramaswami Chettiar and Annamalai Chettiar spent a lakh of rupees on a college at Madurai and Rs. 30 lakhs on a university named after the latter.⁴⁸ Theagaraja Chettiar of Madurai and Alagappa Chettiar of Karaikudi followed suit.

Beri Chettis

It is believed that the Beri Chettis hailed originally from Kaveripattinam near Kumbakonam. They aspired to Vaisya ranking. This mercantile community produced great commercial magnates like P. Theagaraya Chetti and Gopathi Narayanaswami Chetti. Their contributions to the commercial prosperity of the Madras Presidency was in no way insignificant.

Komati Chettis

Komatis, a Telugu speaking business community, had played a significant role as traders and money lenders, in the commercial development of South India. The northern circars was the centre of their activities, but later due to vast commercial opportunities, they extended their activities west-ward through Hyderabad and the ceded districts. Even in southern cities like Salem, Coimbatore and Madura, they had established their business.⁴⁹ They imitated the ways of life of Brahmins. So they despised the other non-Brahmin communities. They styled themselves as Vaisyas and wore the holy thread. They were noted for their opulence and thrift.⁵⁰ As early as 1907 they had founded an association, 'The Arya Vaisya Mahasabha' through which they negotiated with the Government of Madras. "The Maha Sabha petitioned for trading rights, for the extension of commercial education, for the privilege of being consulted on legislation affecting commercial life and for legislative council seats."⁵¹ Thus it acted as a pressure group in the provincial politics of Madras.

Vaniyars

Vaniyars were predominantly traders in oil. They used to carry on business in oil seeds. Even pressing of oil seeds was a part of their profession. Being an important segment of the trading community, their contribution to the commercial prosperity of peninsular India was remarkable. Some of them possessed landed property and for them cultivation was an additional avocation. They desired to be shown in census reports as Vaisyas. Like Komatis, they were also well-known for their frugality though not for their opulence.

Cultivating Castes

The castes which pursued cultivation as their profession were many in number. It included mainly the Vellalas from the Tamil region, the Reddis, the Kammas, the Baliya Naidus from Telugu country and the Nairs from Malayalam area.

(1) *The Tamil Vellalas*

They were mainly landowners and tillers of the soil, forming an important part of the rural population. The subdivisions among them were exceedingly numerous. Nearly 590 names were entered in the census schedules as agricultural castes though in many cases these were merely repetitions of names with slight variations referring to the localities in which they resided. Among the Vellalas of Tamil Nadu, the Thondai Mandalam Vellalas, the Karkatha Vellalas, the Nanchinad Vellalas and the Kongu Vellalas were noteworthy. Though they were essentially agriculturists, their customs and manners widely differed from each other. Generally, they were industrious. Their frugality was proverbial. The Vellalas of Tamil country would not engage themselves in any work which was considered degrading. They were "very orthodox in their religious practice, sometimes even more so than the Brahmins."⁵⁸ As regards eating and drinking, many followed very much the practices of the Brahmins. In short, they were the people who responded first to the impulse of sanskritisation. Some of the Vellalas of Tamil country utilised the earliest opportunity to benefit by the introduction of western system of education. By 1871 at least one Vellala had taken his M.A. Degree.⁵⁹

Some were employed in government service particularly as village karnams and a few as public servants of higher standing. The Vellalas of Coimbatore who were called Kongu Vellalas were truly the backbone of the district. They added wealth by their industry and economy. They widely differed from other Vellalas in their customs and manners. It is interesting to note that they employed their own caste men for sacred ceremonies but not Brahmin priests.

(2) *The Reddis*

The Reddis, otherwise known as Kapus were the largest Telugu speaking single caste in the Madras Presidency. They were mostly cultivators, farmers and small landed proprietors with 'a firm grip on the land.' They occupied a rank in the social hierarchy next to the Brahmins. The Anantpur Gazetteer describes them as 'the great land-holding body in the Telugu districts.'⁵⁴ The rich landowners among the Reddis lived in well-built houses and enjoyed a very comfortable life keeping their surroundings neat and tidy. Their attachment to land was proverbial. The very word Reddi which means 'king' speaks of their position of rural dominance.⁵⁵ This landowning class, due to a feeling of pride, considered education merely as a means of seeking employment. Therefore they were reluctant to send their children to schools and colleges. At the beginning of this century, the Presidency College in Madras city had mostly the sons of officials as students on its roll.⁵⁶ The Rayalaseema was the stronghold of the people of this community.

(3) *The Kammas*

The Kammas and Velamas were the two major sections of the Naidu community who predominantly settled down in the deltaic region, surrounding the mouths of the Godavari and Krishna rivers. They were closely allied to the Kapus. Writing collectively about them W. Francis states that "all four of these large castes (the Kammas, Kapus, Velamas and Telugas) closely resemble one another in appearance and customs and seem to have branched off from one and the same Dravidian stock."⁵⁷

Kammas were originally warriors by occupation. They were now mainly agriculturists. Some of them had chosen trading as their avocation. As a class of cultivators they owned many of the zamindaris in the districts of the north. By instinct they were very proud perhaps due to their alleged Kshatriya origins. They would even work as coolies in the fields but would on no account engage themselves as domestic servants.⁵⁸ This fine and well-built class of cultivators were very industrious, well-to-do, intelligent and exclusive, having a great aversion to urban life. Despite their tenacity to a life of non-vegetarianism, the Velamas followed many of the religious practices and customs of the Brahmins. The leading aristocrats of the Madras Presidency namely the Rajahs of Bobbili, Kalahasti, Pittapur and Venkatagiri and other landed zamindars in the northern region hailed from the Velama group of Naidu caste. They did play a conspicuous role, when the Justice Party took up the reins of administration in Madras under the diarchic constitution.

(4) *The Balija Naidus*

The Balija Naidus, the chief Telugu trading caste were found scattered throughout the Presidency of Madras. In the Tamil districts they were known as Vadugans and Kavarais.⁵⁹ A considerable section of this community was engaged in agricultural work. That is the reason why they were described as Kapus which generally means a ryot but the common name of the caste was Naidu. In fact, they occupied a high place in the social system. They were to be seen in every walk of life. "A few were found working as railway station masters, head coolies, bakers, butlers, municipal inspectors, tappal (post) runners, hawkers and hotel-keepers." Since the majority of them lived by trade, the title 'Chetti' was used in preference to Naidu.⁶⁰ This was a most enterprising community, producing many creative works of art. Wood carving industry at Tirupati was fully monopolised by them. Being people of various avocations, the Balijas were necessarily multi-lingual.⁶¹ They were in fact a significant political factor in the provincial politics of Madras Presidency since they evinced greater enthusiasm in western education than the Kapus.

(5) *The Nairs*

The Nairs occupied a dignified position in the social hierarchy of Malabar ranking next to Nambudiri Brahmins. It is commonly said that the word Nair is derived from the Sanskrit *Nayaka*, a leader. R. Sewell connects them with the Nayakans of Vijayanagar.⁶² It is however difficult to trace any possible link they could have had with the governors of Vijayanagar Empire. It cannot be denied that in the medieval Kerala which resembled "the feudal Europe with its various forms of infeudation and subfeudation" the political authority which had a clear militaristic base was completely wielded by the Nair aristocracy and the wealthy Nambudiri Brahmins.⁶³ Even at the beginning of this century it was they who formed the Maharajah's own brigade in Travancore. "The traditional Kerala Nayar male was expected to be always in good physical condition so that he could go out as a soldier if called upon."⁶⁴ Therefore each large Nair *taravad* (household) maintained gymnasiums (*kalari*) for the purpose of training men of the *taravad* as well as their followers. Nonetheless, their chief occupation was agriculture. The soldiers of the Maharajah's brigade too attended to agricultural work during all their off-duty days, largely to supplement their monthly pay.⁶⁵ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they possessed a clearly articulated middle class identification. They were able to withdraw from the land whenever the other employment attracted them. However, "this did not preclude their role as absentee landlords who spent their holidays and retirement in their native village."⁶⁶ Since they were industrious they did not hesitate to take up any occupation.

In the field of education they occupied a prominent position. It was the only non-Brahmin community in the peninsular India which encouraged women's education. Almost every Nair girl was sent to the village school to learn the three R's quite as much as a matter of course as the schooling of boys.⁶⁷ This was a significant feature of Malabar life which made it the most literate province in the whole of Indian subcontinent with regard to female education.

As far as the English education was concerned the Nairs largely availed themselves of the opportunity and facility afforded by the Government of Travancore. It is worth mentioning here that a good number of Nair girls in the beginning of this century passed the matriculation examination of the University of Madras. The Nairs as a class were educationally the most advanced of the communities of Malabar. Intellectually they were the equals of the Brahmins of the East Coast. Many of them had risen to the higher posts in government. Indeed this caste had supplied many of the leading members of the learned professions.⁶⁸

Artisan Castes

The artisan castes in Madras Presidency were a homogeneous group constituting three per cent of the total population. They were noted for their intrinsic talents and workmanship. They were widely known by the Tamil name Kammalan. In Telugu they were referred to as Kamsala and Panchala. The name Panchala was given to them as people of five distinct trades (goldsmithy, blacksmithy, copper and brass smithy, carpentry and and stone-cutting) constituted this group. They were regarded as belonging to the same caste since all of them dined together and intermarried. They also donned the sacred thread and called themselves 'Vishwa Brahmins'. They suffixed their names with a term 'Acharry' (religious teacher) which was common both to Brahmins and artisans. "The artisan castes in South India have always maintained a struggle for a higher place in the social scale than that allotted to them by Brahminical authority and hence probably these assumptions." Though they were not dominant in respect of their strength, they occupied a place of respect and honour in South Indian society since their services, especially of those of the carpenters and blacksmiths, were very much needed for the agrarian population.

Thus the non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency, as already mentioned, constituted a congeries of castes. They included not only the landowning and cultivating castes like Vellala, Reddi and Kamma, but also the trading castes such as Chetti. The artisan castes such as goldsmiths, carpenters and blacksmiths

and servicing castes namely barbers and washermen formed a part of this cluster of communities. Each of these castes enjoyed a greater measure of unity than the non-Brahmins as a whole, although most of the major ones were themselves subdivided. In fact there were a lot of socio-economic differences within each but they sank their differences when they began to resist the monopoly of the Brahmins in government service and in education and to end their domination in the public and political life of the presidency.

The Untouchables

The most dismal aspect of the *varna* system of the Hindu society is that the people who performed certain essential economic tasks in agriculture were considered as outcastes. They were described by various names such as Untouchables, Unapproachables, Depressed Classes, Adi-Dravidas, Panchamas, Scheduled Castes and so on. They also called themselves the 'fifth varna'. "Harijan is the glorified term coined by Gandhi in 1933 for describing the total body of Depressed Classes. The term 'Scheduled Castes' is the expression standardised in the constitution of the Republic of India though this name was first invented by the Simon Commission".⁶⁹

The people of Depressed Classes were generally known as Pariahs in Tamil country, Pulaiyas in Malabar, and Malas and Madigas in Telugu regions. It is apparently fanciful to note that the word Pariah is said to be derived from *parai*, a drum, an instrument which these people beat at festivals.⁷⁰ Throughout the sub-continent they were derided as untouchables perhaps due to their misfortune to do certain essential works of unclean nature and were treated with great harshness. There was a crude belief among the Hindus that they (untouchables) could not touch others without making them impure.⁷¹ In some places they might not enter into streets or lanes used by caste Hindus. In Malabar, untouchability was practised in an abominable way. Their mere presence or proximity defiled higher castes. It was a caste of unapproachability rather than untouchability.⁷² Till the beginning of this century the unapproachability was unrestrained.

Untouchability was equally bad in Tamilnadu. The Pariahs in Tamil Nadu lived in separate places on the outskirts of the village called 'Parachèri'. Before the advent of the British rule, the whole of the Pariah community without exception were the slaves of the superior castes. The condition of Pariah resembled to a certain extent that of the serf of France and other countries of northern Europe in ancient times.⁷³ These people together with their kith and kin bound themselves to the landlords for life. The village scavengers who were obliged to clean the public latrines, to sweep the streets and remove all rubbish invariably belonged to this class. These men were generally known as 'Thottis'. In addition to the dirty work of scavenging, they were employed in letting the water into the tanks and channels for irrigating the paddy fields, and on this account they were treated with some consideration by the rest of the villagers.⁷⁴ It is lamentable to think that the members of this class despite their degradation were the most useful of all the communities. On them the whole agricultural work of the country devolved.

This community which formed nearly 20 per cent of the total population suffered from many social disabilities. They were forbidden to cross a street in which Brahmmins were living.⁷⁵ Entry into Hindu temples was denied to them. Nevertheless they were not prevented from making offerings to the gods. A *Panchama* making a purchase from a shopkeeper had to go through a long and humiliating process. He should place money on the ground in front of the shop and withdraw to a safe distance. The shopkeeper then would come out with the goods and put them on the ground and collect the money. The *Panchama* finally would take the goods after the shopkeeper was back in his shop.⁷⁶

J. H. Hutton in his *Caste in India* enumerates the various restrictions which the Kallars of Ramanathapuram district imposed on them, the disregard of which led to the use of violence by them (Kallars) against the untouchables.

- (a) They should not wear any jewel either of gold or silver.

- (b) The males of this community should not be allowed to wear their clothes below their knees or above the hips. They were forbidden to wear modern attire such as coats, shirts and banians.
- (c) Nor were they allowed to have their hair trimmed.
- (d) They were permitted to use only earthenware vessels.
- (e) The women of this community were the worst sufferers. They should not cover the upper portion of their bodies with jackets or cloth. Nor were they allowed to use flowers or saffron paste.
- (f) They were not privileged to wear sandals or use umbrellas.
- (g) Worst of all was that they should not read or get educated.⁷⁷

It is necessary to point out here that much of the discrimination practised did not come under the purview of the law at all. It is generally believed that the Brahmins who were at the top of social hierarchy imposed these taboos on these innocent people. It is true that they laid the foundation of the caste complex and *varna* system but in later times the caste Hindu non-Brahmins were the people who extended them to the extreme limit.⁷⁸ Thus the vigorous implementation of caste system made the untouchables the most oppressed section of the Hindu society. At one time it was believed that the cleavage between the untouchables and the rest of the Hindu society had a clean racial basis but researches in anthropology have disproved this theory. However, their style of life and the religious practices differed everywhere from those of the upper castes but the distinction appeared to be particularly marked in peninsular India.⁷⁹ The differences in styles of life have been sharpest between Brahmins and Harijans. The former represented the top and the latter the bottom in respect of the hierarchy.

Attempts by the untouchables to alter their style of life or to assert their civic rights were often resented rather than opposed by the upper castes, particularly by the dominant peasant castes in the rural areas. Consequently, they developed a spirit of discontent towards the entire traditional order. This was very much utilised by the Christian missionaries who "found in them a fertile field for their evangelical work." They did much to elevate the condition and character of this class. The Government of Fort St. George also paid some attention to the amelioration of this people, and it appointed a Commissioner of Labour to look after their educational and economic interests. In the meantime several associations sprang up to protect their welfare of which the Depressed Class Union, the Pariah Mahajanah Sabha, and the Poor School Society were significant. However, their politicization was slow obviously because a long tradition of servility often prevented them from asserting their rights. "During the first three decades of the present century organised politics was largely the prerogative of the western-educated urban middle class and the representation of the Harijans in this class was negligible."⁸⁰

The Caste as the Idiom of Social Mobility

The political arena of South India at the beginning of this century underwent a remarkable change. There was a mushroom growth of communal organisations in all principal cities and towns. They acted as pressure groups and tried to extract concessions and privileges from the Government of Fort St. George. With the introduction of Minto-Morley Reforms, the government began to play the role of a patron of castes and communities which resulted in the multiplication of their political activities. Besides, the other interest groups such as landlords, zamindars, traders, factory workers and others also got themselves organised into associations. Simultaneously the Muslims and Christians organized themselves into two solid groups. Therefore the provincial politics of Madras became crowded with the activities of divergent interests mostly of communal nature. This development 'deeply coloured the South Indian political history'⁸¹ and made the South Indian society hasten towards "the new principles of

political organisation and a new structure of political relationship. ”⁸²

The Formation of Caste Organisation in Madras Presidency

It is very difficult to discern the reasons for the proliferation of caste associations in the Presidency of Madras. However, M. N. Srinivas attempts to explain the situation which facilitated the growth and development of caste organisations. The mighty revolution which took place in the field of transport and communication during the British regime was one of the primary causes for the mobility of the people from one region to another. The British administrators launched schemes not only for the improvement of communications and transport, but also constructed railways, dug canal and laid roads which broadened the linkages of trade and social intercourse.⁸³ As a result, new towns and cities emerged and they became centres of economic, administrative and educational activities which integrated the previously demobilised communities together.

The growth of literacy caused intellectual awakening among the people of Madras Presidency and helped them get politicised. Similarly, the press, a powerful agency of modernisation carried the ideas and thoughts of people of one group to another over long distances and ‘created wider areas of social perception.’ M. N. Srinivas is of the opinion that the new patterns of mobility which the caste associations encouraged shattered the extreme parochialism of South Indian life and paved the way for wider social contact.⁸⁴

A few trading communities like Komatis who were keen on utilizing the new opportunities “used kinship and local caste institutions to organise their business.” Consequently their commercial activities were greatly extended ; their circle of contact was widened; their marriage alliances were sought over wider areas. To quote C. J. Baker, “often these wider networks found expression in caste associations.”⁸⁵ Trading communities of South India such as the Devangas of Salem and Coimbatore, Nadars of Tinnevely and Ramnad, Komatis from Andhra districts and

Beri Chettis in Madras organised caste associations of this kind. "These associations addressed themselves to social reform within the caste and sought to secure a better position for the caste in the wider society"⁸⁶ Unintentionally the Government of Fort St. George became the foster-mother of these caste organisations. "From the later 19th century the Madras Government showed itself increasingly ready to listen to political petitions couched in the language of caste, and to distribute government favours with at least one eye on caste considerations."⁸⁷ This has been amply evidenced by the receipt of representations from various caste groups by Edwin Montagu in 1917.

Knowing the attitude of the Government of Madras the politicians used caste idioms while petitioning to the government on matters of their own interests. "In the political context, caste associations represented functional groupings, men came together because rewards were available to them as a group"⁸⁸ This had encouraged even the prominent peasant communities of South India namely Reddis and Kammas in Andhra and Goundars in Tamil Nadu to mobilise themselves as caste groups. Despite their parochial nature these caste associations performed a commendable social service. They established banks and served like freemason brothers. Almost all caste organisations encouraged education by running student hostels and instituting scholarships with a view to pushing their representatives into public services.⁸⁹ R. Suntharalingam considers the emergence of caste associations as a twentieth century phenomenon and as the outcome of the failure of the professional elite to resolve tensions generated by the uneven rate of the western impact on South India.⁹⁰

In the light of the discussion embodied in the foregoing pages it may be deduced that the emergence of the Justice Party was fundamentally "a movement to achieve mobility on the part of caste groups which had lagged behind Brahmins in westernisation."⁹¹

CHAPTER I

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The Genesis of the Justice Party

The Justice Party,¹ otherwise known as the South Indian Liberal Federation, was formed at the fag end of 1916 'to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the non-Brahmin community' Any attempt to elevate the non-Brahmins meant challenging the dominance of the Brahmins in all walks of life, particularly in the spheres of education and government service. Essentially it was a movement for uplifting the non-Brahmins and a revolt against Brahmin ascendancy. It claimed that it represented the aspirations of a wide range of non-Brahmin castes amounting to nearly 97 per cent of the total population of the presidency. Eventually, it carried on a struggle for communal justice. 'Equal opportunities for all and injustice to none' were the watch-words of the party. It did not aim at bringing the Brahmins down to a lower level.² Social justice was the basic principle of the party. In brief, it was started to fight against the political monopoly, social tyranny and the religious domination of the Brahmins and to liberate the mute millions of the non-Brahmin communities from the economic thralldom.³ In the hands of the Justice Party non-Brahminism acquired an ideology of mass mobilisation of non-Brahmins which unavoidably introduced caste conflicts in the politics of South India, but the

conflict, from the point of view of the non-Brahmins, was between the 'forward' Brahmins and the 'backward' non-Brahmins.⁴ M. R. Barnett characterises it as a struggle between a landowning non-Brahmin elite with a history of rural dominance and a nascent urban Brahmin elite.⁵ In her view "the non-Brahmin community" is "a cultural construct which united diverse castes within an encompassing political identity."⁶

S. N. Balasundaram holds the view that the non-Brahmin movement which the Justice Party represented was "the volcanic eruption of the long-smouldering jealousy and fear felt by the educated non-Brahmins towards the Brahmins who had an early start in the competitive race for jobs under the British government."⁷ In the words of its founder, Dr. T. M. Nair, "the non-Brahmin movement which gave expression to the non-Brahmin feelings, long smouldering, is a protest against Brahmin leadership."⁸ S. Saraswathi describes it as 'a political party with moderate' political ambitions with 'realistic' views on socio-political questions and a party with a definite practical programme to carry on the Government of the province in co-operation with the then British rulers."⁹ In the history of the progress of the Backward Classes, the Justice Party finds the foremost place.¹⁰ Similarly, in the political history of the Madras Presidency, its role as a ruling party from 1921 to 1926 and from 1930 to 1937 is not at all insignificant. The Montford reforms were implemented by it with exceptional success and it paved the way for constitutional advance to a very great extent. Social reform had been one of its planks. It created a spirit of intelligent inquiry in the minds of the people for testing old customs and old institutions which outlived their usefulness. In the sphere of religion, it strenuously advocated the eradication of abuses in the administration of the temples. In the economic field it stood for the cause of the teeming millions of the agriculturists.¹¹ More than anything, the Justice Party pleaded for equal rights irrespective of creed, colour or caste distinctions.

The Concept of Non-Brahminism

The concept of non-Brahminism which the Justice Party adumbrated was an outcome of the westernisation rather than the politicization of the communities other than the Brahmins. Before the emergence of the Justice Party 'non-Brahmin' was not a relevant social, cultural or political category.¹² The congeries of castes that later came to be designated as 'non-Brahmins' identified themselves with specific castes, such as Vellalas, Reddis, Naidus, Nairs and so on. "Therefore, the very idea of a non-Brahmin movement represents a significant reorientation of perceptions about castes and communities."¹³ The protagonists of non-Brahminism gave a historical background to the movement by linking the non-Brahmins with the Dravidians of the hoary past. They looked down upon the Brahmins as descendants of the Aryan invaders and therefore aliens who had enslaved and divided the indigenous population by means of the caste system. In fact, the term Dravidian had acquired at the turn of the century not only a linguistic meaning but a racial connotation.¹⁴ Western scholars like Robert Caldwell used the word 'Brahmins' as synonymous with 'Aryans'.¹⁵ The leaders of the Justice Party employed the term Dravidian to denote the non-Brahmin. However, the concept of Dravidianism is considered by M. N. Srinivas as a myth and by some others as bookish one. There is one school of thought which holds the view that the Dravidianism was only an invention of western linguists. It is indeed a ticklish issue. The Dravidian ideology, as Marguerite Ross Barnett remarks, "is difficult to analyse because of its descriptive pretensions and its metaphoric content."¹⁶ However, she is of the view that the emergence of this concept of 'non-Brahmin' was an ideological challenge to Brahmin orthodoxy.¹⁷ None the less, it is true that the leaders of the non-Brahmin movement strongly believed that the cleavage between Brahmins and non-Brahmins was solely due to ethnic difference.¹⁸

The non-Brahmin movement was not a phenomenon peculiar to Madras Presidency. It found precedent in various provinces

of cis-Vindhyan region. During the days of British paramountcy any movement for social equality and against caste domination had to wear the anti-Brahmin garb since the Brahmin was the kingpin in the *Varnashrama Dharma*. The Hindu social set-up, particularly in peninsular India, gave the Brahmins virtually a dominant position. However, their influence in Bengal was moderated by the trading and literary castes and similarly, in the North-Western provinces by the Rajputs and Muslims. But in Maharashtra and in Madras their power and prestige were absolute and the non-Brahmin castes were in a position of almost total subservience.¹⁹ It is appropriate here to give a brief summary of the non-Brahmin movements which erupted in various regions of South India in order to understand their interactions on each other.

Satya-Shodhak Samaj

The earliest non-Brahmin revolt against 'the tyranny of caste' system was organised by Jotirao Phule, a leader of Kshatriya Mali caste, who founded the Satya-Shodhak Samaj in 1873 which literally meant 'Truth Seeking Society'.²⁰ It aimed at liberating the lower castes from thralldom. Phule was hailed as Mahatma by his followers perhaps due to the fact that he sought truth and insisted on equality of all people. This society was anti-Brahmin in its orientation. Its attack on Brahminism was vehement as the Hinduism of his day had deteriorated into Brahminism which bred social inequality. As a result, Brahmins became *boodevas* (Gods on earth) and enjoyed power as a priestly class and as the head of the caste system. He thought that the caste system, a creation of Brahmins, was meant to exploit the lower classes. The Brahmins were condemned by him as the descendants of Aryans. His social ideas had the imprints of rationalism. Hence his revolt against priestcraft and caste system. He used the non-Aryan symbol of Raja Bali as opposed to the Brahmin symbol of Rama. He exhorted his followers not to engage the Brahmin priests for conducting rituals. "The objects of the Samaj were to redeem the Shudras and Ati-shudras from the influence of Brahmanical

scriptures... to make them conscious of their human rights, and to liberate them from mental and religious slavery.”²¹ The programme of the society included women’s liberation, education and economic betterment.²² Thus in the words of Gail Omvedt, a well-known sociologist, it was “a rationalistic and equalitarian socio-religious reform organisation.”²³ Though the Samaj attained its greatest strength between 1911 and 1930, it never gained political power.²⁴ Nevertheless, it richly deserves to be called the forerunner to a series of similar movements throughout peninsular India. His ‘non-Aryan theory’ and ‘the ideology of Cultural Revolt’, preceded the development of a similar emphasis on ‘Dravidian’ identity in the Madras non-Brahmin movement. Therefore his Satya-Shodhak movement was the first of its kind in India to uplift the depressed castes and classes.²⁵

The Non-Brahmin Movement in Kolhapur

Kolhapur, a princely state, was one of the centres of non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra. Its ruler Shahu Chhatrapati, a scion of the great house of Shivaji, championed the cause of the non-Brahmins who were denied many of the opportunities which they were legitimately entitled to

By the treaty of 1829, Kolhapur surrendered its sovereignty to the British. The Maratha army consisting of mainly Marathas and other non-Brahmins was disbanded. This closed the doors of a major avenue to employment for the Marathas. In the later half of the 19th century, the Brahmins who grabbed the earliest opportunities secured positions in administration in greater numbers. “Even a poor Maratha preferred to carry a sword or join any rank in army rather than become a clerk or plough a field.”²⁶ Since recruitment was based on educational qualification, the only department of the government which had a large number of Marathas on the staff was the police department. But no field was an exception to the Brahmins. They were lawyers, moneylenders, corporators, teachers, and priests. The influence and authority of the Brahmins were felt in every sphere of life though they constituted only a small section of the total population.

At the end of the 19th century, the Kolhapur society stood sharply divided into two sections : the advanced and powerful Brahmins and the backward and powerless non-Brahmins.

Shahu Maharaj who was proud of his birth as a descendant of the Maratha nation-builder, Shivaji, was profoundly influenced by the ideology of the Satya-Shodhak movement. Phule's literature particularly *Gulamgiri* (slavery) had a greater impact on him. He, therefore, adopted a policy to uplift his own caste as well as other non-Brahmins. In this respect the movement that he engineered is justly called the spiritual heir of the Satya-Shodhak movement of Phule.²⁷ However, it is not known why "the Maharaja himself held back from joining the Samaj or fully accepting its radical stands"²⁸, inspite of his fascination for its ideals.

The immediate cause which turned Shahu Maharaj into an enemy of the Brahmins was the *Vedokta* controversy. All palace functions and ceremonies were performed by the Rajopadhya, the Royal Chaplain, in accordance with the puranic rites on the plea that Shahu Maharaj and others were Sudras. It was argued that the Vedic rites were meant for the twice-born castes such as Brahmins, Vaisyas and Kshatriyas. This kind of argument annoyed Shahu. He took it as an insult to his royal lineage. As a result, a decree was issued in 1901 which declared that all functions in the palace should be performed following the Vedic rites and if any one failed to carry out the order he would be suspended from service. When the hereditary high priest of the palace refused to obey the royal order his *inam* lands were confiscated. Similarly, the lands of the Jagadguru Sankaracharya were forfeited when he supported the stand of the Rajopadhya. But their attempts to seek the intervention of the Government of Bombay into this affair proved futile. The reason for taking such a hard line attitude by the hereditary priest was obviously due to the predominant position of the Brahmins not only in Kolhapur but elsewhere in Bombay province. Even Tilak, the so-called leader of the Extremists, argued that '*Vedokta*' rituals might be

awarded to Shahu as the 'Chhatrapati' or king but not as hereditary family right.²⁹ It is interesting to note that both the Rajopadhyas and the Sankaracharya yielded to the royal authority just to get back their confiscated lands.

It was proved beyond doubt that the Brahminical arrogance could be subdued through non-Brahmin political power. The tenacity with which Shahu Maharaj settled the *Vedokta* controversy gave impetus to the non-Brahmin movement in Kolhapur which in fact entered upon a new phase. The Chhatrapati turned out to be a radical and issued an order in 1902, reserving 50 per cent of the vacancies in his administration for the members of the backward communities.³⁰ The main aim in launching such a far-reaching measure was to secure adequate representation of the non-Brahmins in the public services and to encourage them to pursue higher education. The communal G.O. issued by Shahu was the first of its kind in India, to be followed by other southern states. The Mysore Government adopted a similar measure in 1921,³¹ Madras in 1921 during the regime of the Justice Party³² and the Bombay Government in 1925. Thus the communal G.O. of Kolhapur Government acted as a trend-setter and produced radical results in the social set-up of the peninsular India. Even the first amendment of the Indian Constitution was made in the year 1951 to uphold the egalitarian principle that this G.O. enshrined. Thus it was a well conceived measure far in advance of the time in which Shahu Maharaj lived. Another measure that he took was to weaken the priestly authority of the Brahmins in Kolhapur. Phule's principle of conducting marriages and other religious ceremonies without Brahmin priests captured his imagination. The logical outcome of it was the creation of the Maratha priesthood in 1920 and the subsequent establishment of *Kshatra Jagad-guru*. A royal order was promulgated by Shahu appointing Maratha priests and as a follow-up measure a Kshatriya Vedic School was founded to train Maratha priests. A more reformative step that Shahu took in the religious sphere was the constitution of the Devasthanam (Charitable) Inams Department and placing it under the control of the Revenue Officer. The Chhatrapati further

directed that the surplus accruing from the income of religious institutions should be used for educational purposes. The leaders of the Justice Party, like those of Kolhapur movement, undertook the study of the Vedas and chanting of mantras in order to dispense with the services of Brahmin priests at religious functions. It is worth mentioning here that a special training school was also started for this purpose at Kollur in Tenali Taluk."³³ Likewise, the Devasthanam Inams Department constituted by Shahu very well served as a precursor to the Board of Commissioners created by the Justice Party in accordance with the Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1925.

Initially the non-Brahmin movement in Kolhapur was merely a protest against the dominance of Brahmins in the administration. But *Vedokta* controversy which acted as a catalyst polarised the castes in Kolhapur into Brahmin and non-Brahmin groups. This movement in fact, caused "a ferment at lower levels of society" and "pushed Shahu to the left."³⁴ "His hostility to Brahmin educational and cultural dominance led to a climate in which he sponsored the growth of a militancy and social radicalism among the educated non-Brahmins as well as among the poor in Kolhapur."³⁵

The Non-Brahmin Revolt in Travancore

The non-Brahmin movement in Travancore was mainly a revolt against the monopoly that the Tamil Brahmins enjoyed in the administrative service of the State. The Tamil Brahmins who were famously known as Pattar Brahmins were regarded by the Malayali speaking natives of the state as 'foreigners', though they were residents there for centuries. Their origin is obscure. Nothing is known as to when they came and settled in the southern part of Kerala. However, the 18th century witnessed an inflow of these Brahmins from Tanjore and Tinnevely districts of Madras Presidency into Kerala. Their aim in crossing the border was only to avail themselves of positions of power and profit in the Travancore and Cochin administrative services. Since they had

been exposed to English education much earlier than the non-Brahmin castes in Kerala, they had the earliest opportunity of securing government jobs when the administration of Travancore was reoriented on western style. Originally these Pattar Brahmins were employed as tutors, temple managers, cooks and personal attendants to the members of the royal families of these states.³⁶ The Maharajas who were enamoured of Brahminical way of life, appointed them *mirasdars*, *munshis* (bench clerks) and accountants in the newly reorganised set-up of the administration. A few of them acquired lands and became landlords. Those who settled in Palghat taluk pursued professions like money-lending and cultivation despite the fact that a large number of them were employed as temple attendants.³⁷

The Nambudiris who were at the top of the social hierarchy claimed a higher status than the Pattar Brahmins. Yet there was actually no rivalry between them. Moreover, the Nambudiri Brahmin families who lived in Travancore and Cochin States were a few in number. The Pattar Brahmins who had acquired a knowledge of the Vedas occupied a very important position in the social set-up of these states. They despised the Nairs and treated them as inferiors. They, in turn, exercised a greater control over the Ezhavas, who, inspite of their numerical strength, were given a low position in the caste-ridden society of Kerala. "The caste system in all its severity and rigidity divided the Hindu society into innumerable exclusive groups mutually hating and co-operating only to degrade the other."³⁸ The rigidity of caste kept the lower castes in permanent bondage and ignorance. Throughout the 19th century the Ezhavas worked as landless labourers and as cultivating tenants. They were bereft of education. In fact they were prevented from entering the school lest their approach should pollute the atmosphere. "They were totally excluded from reaping the political or administrative benefits."³⁹ They smarted under the social injustice and disabilities imposed on them by centuries of tradition. These social constraints imposed on the community had adverse effects. Mass conversions of the Ezhavas to Christianity was the logical outcome of the rigours of caste tyranny. The downtrodden section of the people thus

joined the new religion since "the humanitarian activities of the Christian missionaries assured them a modicum of rights and privileges enjoyed by the caste Hindus."⁴⁰

With the introduction of western education and the spread of liberal and democratic ideas, the downtrodden underdogs broke the shackles of customs and traditions and became more and more conscious of their fundamental rights. The Ezhavas were not the only one section discriminated by the Government of Travancore. The Nairs and Syrian Christians despite their English education, were also given unfair treatment. History reveals that there was "a distinguished line of Dewans who had sprung from the Nair class and they were renowned as much for their administrative capabilities as for their deep-seated devotion to the throne."⁴¹ During their heyday almost all higher appointments were also held by them. Though they had been slow to take advantage of English education, they were not lagging behind any community in the field of higher education. A good number of them had become graduates. But, in spite of their having kept themselves abreast of the times, they occupied only the lowest rungs of the official ladder. The reason was not far to seek. Travancore was ruled from 1817 to 1872 for about half a century by a number of foreign Dewans one after another who systematically introduced their relations, castemen and friends into the state service. They scrupulously avoided Nairs being appointed in any higher positions. Even efficient and well-educated Malayali Sudras were denied the opportunities of entering the Huzur and Revenue Offices. The judicial and revenue branches of the administration were mostly in the hands of foreign Brahmin graduates.⁴² A vast number of of the Brahmins were free from taxation. In fact they were the favoured children of the Government of Travancore. Their undue predominance and monopoly in the administration of the state created a feeling of animosity rather than jealousy among the non-Brahmin communities. The hostility and protest of the non-Brahmins were expressed through a weighty memorial, prepared by K. P. Sankara Menon, a Vakil of High Court of Madras in 1891, and signed by more than ten thousand people of different castes, creeds and calling. Even Nambudiris signed the above memorial.

The signatories included several officials of the state, leading members of the bar at Trivandrum, Alleppey, Quilon and Parur and rich landlords of various communities. The memorial was printed both in English and Malayalam and submitted to His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore. "This was the first visible sign of social discontent in the state. It accused the administration of following a pernicious policy of denying admission to able and educated Malayalis to the various offices and of promoting carefully the interests of foreigners, especially the relatives and castemen of officials in power."⁴³

As a corollary, the Brahmins submitted a counter-memorial to the king which refuted the arguments and allegations of their antagonists. However, there was no perceptible improvement in the attitude of the Maharajah. Then came the revolt of the Ezhava against the caste tyranny. It too appeared in the form of a memorial which was submitted to the Maharajah of Travancore under the leadership of Dr. P. Palpu. It was signed by 13,176 members of the Ezhava community. They pleaded therein for ordinary civic rights. The reply of His Highness was whimsical. He asked them "why don't you change the religion?"⁴⁴ These memorials reveal that the system of Government in Travancore was distinctly feudal. It reduced most of the people to the "condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water to their lords."⁴⁵

The non-Brahmin protest in Kerala had a different behavioural pattern since it was not opposed to the native Nambudiri Brahmins even though their 'predominance created a condition of general degradation.'⁴⁶ The reason was obvious. They were not contenders for jobs in the administrative set-up of Travancore. In fact, they were content with their traditional status. It was therefore a conflict between the 'foreign' Brahmins and the 'native' non-Brahmins. Nevertheless, the revolt of the non-Brahmins indicated that there was an intellectual awakening among the masses which challenged the dominance of the Brahmins.

The Non-Brahmin Awakening in Mysore

The preponderance of Brahmins in various spheres of public life in Mysore as elsewhere in southern states of India created

a feeling of frustration and resentment among the elite non-Brahmins. Political awareness which came hand in hand with westernisation heightened not only the linguistic consciousness but gave impetus to casteism.⁴⁷ As a result, the leading non-Brahmin castes such as Vokkaligas and Lingayats organised caste associations to further the interests of their own castes in the race for urban development.⁴⁸ Even in the precincts of the palace of Mysore there were reverberations of resentment against the overwhelming position of the Brahmins in the civil service. The Maharajah's uncle and brother came out openly to oppose the monopoly of Brahmins in both administrative and educational services. The memorial which the non-Brahmins of Mysore submitted to the Public Service Commission in 1914 indicated how predominant the Brahmin element was in the civil service of Mysore and argued for proportionate representation of non-Brahmins in the administrative services in accordance with their strength of population.⁴⁹

An impetus to the non-Brahmin cause came from an unexpected quarter. C. R. Reddy, a Cambridge scholar noted for his erudition and scholarship, joined the Maharajah's College as Professor. Subsequently, he was elevated to the position of the Principal of the college. The popularity which he enjoyed as the Principal of the college got him the post of Inspector-General of Education for the whole state.⁵⁰ The yeoman service that C. R. Reddy rendered to the cause of higher education attracted the leaders of the Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities who played a crucial role in bringing the leaders of the two communities together on the ground of anti-Brahminism.⁵¹ As the Inspector-General of Education C. R. Reddy took the radical and sensational step by throwing open all the schools to the Harijans.⁵²

The Founding of Praja Mithra Mandali

An organisation to voice forth the views of the non-Brahmins of Mysore was a long-felt need. The initial efforts of some of the non-Brahmin leaders went abortive. By 1917, Reddy ventured to give shape and form to the anti-Brahmin feelings with the help of two prominent citizens of Mysore namely M. Basavaiah and

H. Channaiah⁵³ and also a few Muslim leaders. What Dr. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti were to Madras, Basavaiah and Channaiah were to Mysore. Eventually an organisation called **Praja Mithra Mandali** was born with a new creed which advocated equal opportunities and adequate representations in public services for all communities. It urged for concessions to non-Brahmins in education, government employment and political representation.⁵⁴ Since it was the first formal political association, it captured the imagination of the people quickly. Curiously enough it enjoyed the royal patronage by receiving secret financial help from the members of the Maharajah's family who were very much interested in pressing the claims of the non-Brahmins.⁵⁵ In 1917, C. R. Reddy organised a systematic campaign to win special treatment for non-Brahmins through the press and other national forums such as the legislature. "This campaign reached a high pitch on 18th November 1917 when the non-Brahmins organised what was probably the state's first mass political meeting in Bangalore, which synchronised with "the presentation of a proposal to the Maharajah for major concessions for non-Brahmins." As a follow-up measure, the **Praja Mithra Mandali** sent a delegation to the Maharajah in June 1918 to 'present a formal plea' on behalf of the non-Brahmins. The response of the ruler of Mysore to the demands of the leaders of the **Mandali** was encouraging. In August 1918 a committee was appointed under Sir Leslie Miller to enquire into the necessity of giving communal representation to the non-Brahmins in the state administration. The report of the committee, submitted in August 1919, stressed the need for special provisions for non-Brahmins in granting scholarships and in giving educational facilities and also in offering appointments in the state civil service. The recommendations of the Miller committee were accepted by the Maharajah who translated them into action by a royal order in May 1921. The appointment of Miller's committee had an adverse reaction from the Brahmin communities. The Brahmin Dewan, M. Visvesvaraya resigned. For the first time a non-Brahmin, the uncle of the Maharajah, one Kantharaj Urs was appointed the Dewan of Mysore under a very strong pressure from the royal family.⁵⁶ The leadership offered

by C. R. Reddy was mainly responsible for the spectacular success that non-Brahmins won. But for C. R. Reddy the non-Brahmins of Mysore would have been in the doldrums.

The non-Brahmin movement fell on evil days, when the new Dewan succumbed to an 'apoplectic fit' in March 1922. This, in fact, injured the interests of non-Brahmins. Yet another stumbling blow to the movement was the sudden resignation of C. R. Reddy from his post of Inspector-General of Education. With his exit, the **Praja Mithra Mandali** became inactive and the following years witnessed only its rapid decline. "Even in its period of greatest strength the Mandali was too ephemeral a force to be called a 'movement' or a party. Its active membership probably never exceeded two dozen men..... None of these men sought to develop a popular base among the rural elite.⁶⁷ It indeed lacked internal cohesion. Nevertheless it became a style in the politics of Mysore to talk of 'the non-Brahmin community'; but in no sense the non-Brahmin communities such as Lingayats, Vokkaligas and Muslims formed themselves a community. The leaders who constituted C. R. Reddy's coterie were deeply anxious to further their own interests rather than the interests of the non-Brahmins in general.⁶⁸ The Miller committee brought changes but they were not appreciable. However, it created a feeling of complacency among the leaders of the non-Brahmin communities which threw the fortune of the non-Brahmin movement to wilderness. Still its impact on the subsequent course of events in the politics of Mysore state was no less important.

It is evident from the foregoing analysis that anti-Brahminism which assumed different names in different places provided "a rallying point for a highly heterogeneous group which included a wide variety of castes from different linguistic areas even Muslims Christians and Parsis."⁶⁹ The philosophy that Phule advocated in the later half of the 19th century provided the ideological framework for the programmes of the non-Brahmin parties of Bombay and Madras at the turn of this century. The city of Madras served as an ideological centre for this movement. The new ideas of non-Brahminism spread rapidly throughout South India because of

the composite nature of the Madras Presidency.⁶⁰ Since the city of Madras had attained pre-eminence in cultural and intellectual spheres, the elite groups everywhere in the south turned towards the city for leadership just as western India looked to Bombay.⁶¹ Besides, the leaders of these non-Brahmin movements were constantly in touch with each other despite their independent nature and character. Yet another thing which arrests our attention is that the non-Brahmin movements both in Bombay and in Madras Presidencies were opposed to Home Rule or self-government for it was feared that it would strengthen the Brahmin administration.

The Factors Contributing to the Birth of the Justice Party

1. The Superior Position of the Brahmins in Hindu Ritual Hierarchy

The Brahmins were considered 'the guardians of Hindu tradition'⁶² and 'the regulators of the religious life and social interaction'⁶³ of the Hindus. Though they were numerically small, they had a decisive say in all aspects of life. Their dominant position was solely due to the order of precedence in the varna system which put the Brahmins at the top. The sacred literature of the Hindus which was largely a work of the Brahmins all through the ages lent support to the doctrine of their superiority.⁶⁴ Their dominant position gave them an air of superiority and arrogance. As a result, they treated the non-Brahmins as their social inferiors. The social dominance of the Brahmins generated not only an ill-feeling but bred 'social grievances' among the non-Brahmins.

2. The Preponderance of Brahmins in Civil Service

The population of Madras Presidency was approximately 42 millions⁶⁵ and the Brahmins formed only 3 per cent thereof. Yet they monopolised more than 50 per cent of the places in public services. The non-Brahmins who constituted nearly 86 per cent of the population⁶⁶ occupied only 17 per cent in the public services. The 86 per cent did not include the Muslims and Christians. The Government of Fort St. George furnished

statistics about the proportion of appointments in the public services in the Madras Presidency held by the members of different castes and creeds to the Secretary to the Franchise Committee in the year 1919.

Statement showing the distribution of appointments in Public Works, Revenue, Judicial and Education Departments is given below :⁶⁷—

Classes in Public Works Department (1919)

Name of the posts	Brah.	Non-Brahmins	Muh.	Christians	Total
1. Superintending Engineers ..	2	..	..	..	2
2. Executive Engineers ..	10	4	..	..	14
3. Assistant Engineers ..	8	5	..	1	14
4. Sub-Engineers	46	8	..	..	54
5. Supervisors ..	63	15	..	1	79
6. Overseers ..	132	27	2	1	162
<i>Temporary :</i>					
1. Sub-Engineers	2	..	..	..	2
2. Supervisors ..	3	..	..	..	3
3. Overseers ..	132	66	1	6	205
Total ..	398	125	3	9	535

Name of the posts	Brah.	Non-Brahmins	Muh.	Indian Christian	Europeans & Eurasians	Total
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Classes in Revenue Department (1912)

Higherposts :						
Deputy Collectors, Tahsildars, Deputy Tahsildars and Sub-Magistrates	394	178	50	39	18	679
Revenue Inspectors	638	130	11	21	..	800

Classes in Judicial Department (1919)

Senior Judges, Sub-Judges and District Munsiffs	143	56	6	7	4	216
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Classes in Educational Department (1912)

Higher posts in Educational Department	310	29	23	19	9	390
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A scrutiny of the tables reveals the solid and strong domination of the Brahmins in several high level positions in the government services. In the Department of Public Works there were only two posts of Superintending Engineers which were solely occupied by the Brahmins. There were 14 posts of Executive Engineers of which 10 went to Brahmins. The percentage of posts held by the Brahmins at high level positions varied from 100 per cent to 70 per cent. The Brahmins maintained the same lead at the cadre of Deputy Collectors, Tahsildars, Deputy Tahsildars and Sub-Magistrates in the Revenue Department also. The lead was much pronounced in the Education Department where the Brahmins held 310 higher posts out of 390. Justice, an organ of

the S.I.L.F., speaks of the preponderance of the Brahmins in Education Department as follows : "To say that the Brahmins have enjoyed a disproportionate share of government patronage in almost all departments of the Public Service open to Indians is but to state a truism. In the Education Department, something akin to a monopoly has been established, candidates other than Brahmins being seldom, if ever, preferred except under very exceptional circumstances." It cites an example. Out of 23 appointments of Personal Assistants to Inspectors of schools made in 1917, 20 went to Brahmins and only 3 to non-Brahmins. Therefore, it made an appeal to His Excellency Lord Pentland to break the monopoly of the Brahmins.⁶⁸ (The preponderance of the Brahmins in government services was primarily due to their remarkably high rate of literacy especially in English and also due to their extraordinary skill in passing the examinations. They were the first to respond to westernisation. With their command of English, they entered the administration of the Government of Fort St. George and gained a new criterion of status, besides their pre-eminent position in the Hindu ecclesiastical system.) The Census Report of India, 1921, Madras, gives the following figures with regard to the literacy of the males.⁶⁹

Male Literacy of Selected Castes, 1901-1921

(In per cent)

Name of the Castes	1901	1911	1921
1. Tamil Brahman	73.6	71.9	71.5
2. Telugu Brahman	67.3	68.2	59.7
3. Nair	39.5	41.9	42.9
4. Chetti	32.0	39.1	39.5
5. Indian Christian	16.2	20.4	21.9
6. Nadar	15.4	18.1	20.0
7. Baliya Naidu, Kavarai	14.3	20.9	22.3
8. Vellala	6.9	24.6	24.2
9. Kamma	4.8	12.2	13.6
10. Kapu, Reddi	3.8	9.0	10.2
11. Velama	2.5	3.6	7.0

The above table indicates that the leading non-Brahmin castes such as Nairs, Chettis, Vellalas, Balija Naidus and Nadars attained appreciable progress in education. Nevertheless in the matter of English literacy the lead that the Brahmins established was striking and conspicuous. However, it cannot be denied that those non-Brahmin castes made a gradual progress even with regard to English literacy.⁷⁰

Male Literacy in English of Selected castes, 1901-1921
(In per cent)

Name of the Castes	1901	1911	1921
1. Tamil Brahman	17.88	22.27	28.21
2. Telugu Brahman	10.84	14.75	17.37
3. Indian Christian	2.72	4.41	5.47
4. Nair	1.54	2.97	4.57
5. Balija Naidu, Kavarai	0.98	2.60	3.43
6. Vellala	0.19	2.12	2.37
7. Chetti	0.15	0.98	2.34
8. Velama	0.06	0.41	0.63
9. Nadar	0.05	0.30	0.75
10. Kapu, Reddi	0.04	0.22	0.41
11. Kamma	0.03	0.20	0.45

3. The Influence of Mylapore Clique

The city of Madras saw an active group politics at the commencement of this century owing to the administrative changes⁷¹ which the Reform Acts introduced. Politicians from district centres migrated to the city to explore new avenues to influence the bureaucratic machine.⁷² There were prominent groups in Madras which were ranged against each other. One group, known as the Mylapore clique was led by V. Krishnaswami Iyer and the other group was called the Egmore group of which C. Sankaran Nair, T. Rangachari, Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar and T. M. Nair were noteworthy. Its nucleus consisted of some of the most successful lawyers and administrators of the province such as P. R. Sundaram Iyer, V. C. Desikachariar, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Subramania Iyer and others.⁷³ This group was not only affluent but also highly

educated. The knowledge and the wide range of contacts that these men had throughout the province made them vitally essential as "advisers and assistants to the bureaucracy."⁷⁴ The career of V. Krishnaswami Iyer reveals how the Mylapore clique was powerful. Since he had intimate contact with the governors and senior officials of the government he enjoyed much power. "In the world of public politics he was the recognised dictator of the Madras Congress."⁷⁵ At the turn of this century, the influence of this group of men though tiny and handful had become quite extraordinary. Some of them became judges in the Madras High Court ; a few of them had tremendous voice in the Senate of the University of Madras. A certain number of them had even the privilege of sitting in the Legislative Council as honourable members. Often government utilized their services by making them members of commissions. "From 1910 when the Governor included an Indian on his Executive Council, a Mylaporean consistently filled the place."⁷⁶ This advantageous position helped them acquire important positions in the city of Madras without any difficulty. Their influence indeed grew by leaps and bounds. They successfully replaced some of the local merchants and contractors who had formed themselves into an important bloc in the Madras Corporation. The Madras Port Trust was one of the areas penetrated by the Mylapore clique. The management of the Pachaiyappa's Trust, a charitable foundation, was also taken over by this group of men. Occasionally their influence was felt even at the mofussil centres. A society for temple reform called *Dharmarakshana Sabha* was constituted by them. This organisation influenced the courts to appoint the nominees of the Mylapore group in the management of some of the wealthiest temples of the province.⁷⁷ "The Brahmins who got into the government service and the professions were a microscopic minority of the total Brahmin population, but this 'minority' appeared as a menacing 'majority' because it very nearly monopolised all positions supposed to be politically influential, and therefore very close to the alien sovereign authority."⁷⁸

4. The Brahmin Predominance in the Legislative Council

What was true of government service was equally true of local and other public bodies. The composition of the Madras

Legislative Council from 1910 to 1920 discloses that the Brahmin element dominated the Council. Where the electorate consisted of large number of Brahmins, a non-Brahmin had no chance of getting himself elected.⁷⁹ Of the nine Indians who served as official members, eight were Brahmins.⁸⁰ Even in the 1916 elections to the Legislative Council their gains were immense. They captured 8 out of 9 seats to be filled by the constituencies of Municipalities and Taluk and District Boards. Even the Corporation of Madras which elected a non-Brahmin candidate to the Legislative Council in 1909 and 1912 chose a Brahmin in 1916. The Madras University which had produced a good number of Brahmin graduates never returned a non-Brahmin to the local legislature unless the candidate had been sponsored by the European Fellows. Since 1907, 12 fellows were elected by the registered graduates and out of them with one exception, all were Brahmins.⁸¹ Therefore the influence of Brahmins on the electorate was in fact solid and decisive. While the Legislative Council got filled up with more and more Brahmin elements "the subordinate posts in the public administration became almost a Brahmin monopoly by 1916."⁸²

5. The Nepotism of the Brahmins

The patronage of the Mylapore clique reached its climax in the second decade of this century. It monopolised all elective positions and appointive places. Its monopoly went hand in hand with nepotism. Every door of the office was closed against non-Brahmins and whenever a vacancy occurred a Brahmin official let in his wife's brother or his brothers' son-in-law.⁸³ Fair-play in his pamphlet, *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration, of the Condition of the Non-Brahmin Races* cites an instance of nepotism. One D. Krishna Row, Huzur Sheristadar of Cuddappah district, had "managed to bring one hundred and eight of his actual relations into one district and into only one department of government."⁸⁴ The clanishness of the Brahmin was proverbial.⁸⁵ It was natural on the part of a Brahmin once he entered a public office to convert the whole office into a Brahmin establishment. A single-headed Brahmin thus would become hydra-headed.⁸⁶

The revenue officials of Nellore district gave appointments to 49 relatives and "connections" of G. Venkataramanayya, a Telugu Neyogi Brahmin, ignoring the standing order No. 128 clause (2) of the Board of Revenue.⁸⁷ The concept of patronage acquired a new connotation when it was limited to a small cricle of family alone. In this respect a single family namely the Vembakkam Sri Vaishnava Brahmin family from Chingleput deserves mention. Its members occupied important and powerful offices all over the Presidency, particularly in the Tamil districts and enjoyed the fruits and favours of the highest posts available to Indians in Madras city.⁸⁸ Its influence dates back to 1820 when it managed to get one of its men appointed the Madras city police chief. The same family produced the leading city lawyers for three generations and also the first Indian to be nominated to the Legislative Council in 1861. Two Dewans of Native States were also from this family. V. Bashyam Iyengar who was the leader of the native bar was the undoubted head of this family. Its influence came to be felt throughout the province when the higher posts of the Government of Fort St. George were thrown open to Indians. "By the early 1920s, it had produced another generation of legal giants, three High Court judges, two Attorney-Generals, the first Home Minister under the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and countless minor judges, departmental under-secretaries and government servants."⁸⁹ When the authority and the power of the community grew immensely, the whole political equilibrium of the Presidency was overturned. The Mylapore coterie became colossal and it would either make or mar men and matters. It could throw a person whose family might have ruled his territory for generations out of institutions of local self-government. "It could leave him bare and unprotected in the Legislative Council when his interests were being discussed and arrest him for sedition if he complained. Equally it could give him patronage, office and support and increase his local power."⁹⁰ In fact the collaborators of Mylapore exploited the opportunity afforded to them to such an outrageous extent that "it caused stirs in the press and in the services generally."⁹¹ A. S. Balasubramania Iyer, a city advocate and cousin of C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, was elevated to a sub-judgeship over many who were waiting for years for promotion. Similarly C. V. Kumaraswami Sastri was

appointed in the High Court in 1913. This kind of favouritism not only provoked the wrath of the press but produced a spate of petitions and threatened resignations in the Judicial Department. *The Hindu* criticised such appointments as instances of unconcealed and open corruption of the government. The politicians of the city of Madras from different sections resented the growing influence of the Mylapore group in the administration of the province, and decided to start a political party to espouse the cause of the non-Brahmin communities and to bring them together under a single banner.⁹²

It is appropriate here to quote from the evidence given by K. V. Reddi Naidu before the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and Commons on the Government of India Bill, published in London Civil Service Gazette in September 1919.

It cannot be that 34 million of people are not able to produce a few hundreds of competent men. On the other hand, we find that the non-Brahmins have been urging that not only are competent men available amongst them but they are being assiduously prevented from entering into public services and from having their legitimate share therein, by the clannishness and excessive influence of the Brahmins, who are described as the Magyars of Madras.... It looks as if the public services in that province and representation to the local Legislative Council are a matter of a family arrangement amongst the members of a single community.

Surely something is rotten in the Province of Madras, and it is high time that the authorities in India and in the White Hall look into the matter and set things right.

6. The Madras Provincial Congress—A Sectarian Body

The Brahmin supremacy was quite perceptible even in the Madras Provincial Congress committee, 1914 - 1915. The Report of the executive committee of 1915 discloses that the non-Brahmins were practically excluded from the All-India Congress committee. The only one non-Brahmin who was given a place in the All India forum was A. P. Patro of Berhampur (later a

minister in the Justice Party). This grabbing attitude of the Brahmin community provoked a good deal of adverse criticism in the press particularly, *Madras Mail*, *West Coast Spectator* and *Non-Brahmin*. Confirming the apprehension expressed in the columns of *Madras Mail*, *West Coast Spectator* repeated that the action of the Madras Provincial Congress committee in excluding both Karunakara Menon and P. Kesava Pillai who were not in anyway inferior either to the Triplicane Clique or Mylapore Cabal, would strengthen the impression that "Home Rule will but degenerate into Brahmin rule."⁹³ It further sounded a note of caution that the Brahmin boss-alls and bang-alls of the Mahajana Sabha⁹⁴ and the Congress committee created a feeling of irritation among the non-Brahmins and unless this aggressive attitude was arrested and the spirit of toleration and compromise was allowed to dominate the political atmosphere a sharp division in the political camp between Brahmins and non-Brahmins would be inevitable. *Non-Brahmin*, a political weekly edited by C. Singaravelu Mudaliar, came out with similar criticism. [The sudden pushing up of Justice Seshagiri Iyer to the Presidentship of the Madras Provincial Congress committee over Karunakara Menon and Kesava Pillai by his Brahmin friends reveals the partial attitude and clannish mentality of that community.] It further advised the non-Brahmins to learn from the example of the Muslims who were now one united body so far as their politics and social advancement were concerned and to form a separate association for themselves.⁹⁵ The hostile relations between the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin political leaders which developed rather rapidly since the beginning of the century reached its apogee in 1916,⁹⁶ when the historic non-Brahmin Manifesto was issued by P. Theagaraya Chetti as the secretary of the South Indian People's Association, and the accredited leader of the non-Brahmin movement.

7. The Brahmin Monopoly of the Press

The press, a powerful mass medium, was effectively controlled by the Brahmins in the early decades of the century. The following table discloses how the popular medium of communication, newspapers and periodicals, were operated by the Brahmins.

**List of Newspapers and periodicals published in the Madras Presidency which had a circulation over 3,000
in June 1917**

<i>Serial No.</i>	<i>Name of publication</i>	<i>Language of publication</i>	<i>Place of publication</i>	<i>Edition</i>	<i>Name, caste and the age of editor</i>	<i>Circulation</i>
1.	<i>Ananda Bodhini</i>	Tamil	6, Venkatesa Maistry Street, Sowcarpet, Madras.	Monthly	M. Munuswamy Mudaliyar, Vellala, 32 years.	3,000
2.	<i>Andhra Patrika</i>	Anglo-Telugu	Andhra Patrika Press George Town, Madras.	Daily and Weekly	K. Nageswara Rao, Brahmin, 47 years.	8,300
3.	<i>The Hindu</i>	English	National Press, Ellis Road, Madras.	Daily, Triweekly and Weekly	S. Kasturiranga Iyengar, Brahmin, 52 years.	5,000
4.	<i>Indian Review</i>	English	G. A. Natesan & Co.'s Press, George Town, Madras.	Monthly	G. A. Natesa Ayyar, Brahmin, 58 years.	3,000
5.	<i>Madras Mail</i>	English	Madras Mail Press, 6, North Beach Road, George Town, Madras.	Daily, Tri-Weekly and Weekly	T. E. Welby, European, 35 years.	4,968

6.	<i>Madras Times</i>	English	Madras Times Press, Mount Road, Madras.	Daily	Glyn Barlow, European, 56 years	3,000
7.	<i>Messenger of the Sacred Heart.</i>	Tamil	St. Joseph's Indus- trial School Press, Trichinopoly.	Monthly	Rev. Brother Joseph, Indian Christian, 61 years.	3,800
8.	<i>New India</i>	English	New India Printing Works, 13-14, Second Line Beach, Madras.	Daily	Mrs. Annie Besant, Irish, 69 years.	8,500
9.	<i>Nigazhkalasatyam or The Present Truth</i>	Tamil	Published at the South Indian Mission of the Seventh Day Adventists, Kilpauk printed at the Albi- nion Press, Vepary, Madras.	Quarterly	Rev. J. S. James, American, 38 years	3,000
10.	<i>Satya Duta or Messenger of Truth.</i>	Telugu	S.P.C.K. Press, Vepary, Madras.	Monthly	Rev. A. Subba- rayulu, Indian Christian.	4,200
11.	<i>Swadesamitran</i>	Tamil	Swadesamitran Press, George Town, Madras.	Daily and Tri-Weekly.	A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Brahmin.	4,400

Of the 11 newspapers and periodicals in the Madras Presidency which had a circulation of over 3,000, *Ananda Bodini* was a non-political monthly magazine. *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, a Tamil monthly, *Nigazhkala Satyam or the Present Truth*, a Tamil quarterly and *Satya Duta*, a Telugu monthly, were religious periodicals which had no political overtones. *Madras Mail*, an English daily, triweekly and weekly which had 4,968 subscribers and edited by T. E. Welby, an European, articulated most vehemently the views of the English business group. Similarly, *Madras Times*, an English daily owned by another European, Glyn Barlow, followed the lines of *Madras Mail* and did not care for Indian opinion.⁹⁷ These two European-owned papers were the staunch supporters of the government. Another popular English daily was *New India* owned by Mrs. Besant. As per the statistics furnished by the Government of Fort St. George it was the only newspaper having the largest circulation of 8,500 copies a day. It was started mainly to propagate her Home Rule ideas. In order to pamper her Brahmin friends, it took a pro-Brahmin stance. In fact it turned out to be an open enemy of *Justice*; the daily of the Justice Party thereby opposing the non-Brahmin movement. Another popular paper, *Andhra Patrika*, the Telugu daily and weekly edited by K. Nageswara Rao, a Brahmin, was voicing the claims of the Andhras. Though it was biased towards Telugu language and people, its attitude was nationalistic and pro-Congress.⁹⁸ The leading popular newspapers such as *The Hindu* and *Swadeshamitran* were owned and edited by Brahmins. They had taken a pro-Congress but anti-Justice disposition. From the beginning they were opposed to non-Brahmin movement which they derided as anti-nationalistic and communal. *Indian Review*, a monthly English magazine edited by G. A. Natesan, published a number of articles condemning the ideologies and policies of the Justice Party. Thus the press in the Madras Presidency remained very much a tool in the hands of the Brahmins.

8. The Concept of Sudrahood—A Rallying Factor

The non-Brahmin communities which formed the bulk of the population of the Presidency were derided as Sudras in the *Varna*

system. The Laws of Manu enjoined the Sudras to be the servants and menials of the three higher orders namely (1) the Brahmins, the priestly and learned class ; (2) the Kshatriyas, the military and governing class ; (3) the Vaisyas, traders and agriculturists.⁹⁹ The *Varna* system as stated earlier was invented by the Brahmins to establish their supremacy in the Hindu ritualistic society. But their attempt to classify the people of South India as members of the four *Varnas* as they did in Northern India not only failed but "led to the confusion of castè and prevalence of social jealousies that have characterised the life of South India for a thousand five hundred years."¹⁰⁰ As there were no clearly defined *Varnas* of Kshatriya and Vaisya in this part of the country, the Hindu society gave the general impression as Andre Beteille puts it, that it was broadly divided into three groups, viz., the Brahmins, the Sudras and the Adi-Dravidas.¹⁰¹ This grouping of castes had far-reaching impact on the politics of South India. It remains still a riddle how the term 'Sudra' was applied to the non-Brahmin castes of Madras Presidency though they had honourable avocations and status of their own. But at the same time the application of a collective name "Sudra" for all non-Brahmin castes meant that the people of those castes were a homogeneous group.¹⁰² This became a truism as far as the politics of Madras was concerned when the non-Brahmins of various castes operated as a single political entity to challenge the Brahmins' dominance at the beginning of this century.

The wealthy and educated non-Brahmins took strong exception to the use of the appellation 'Sudras' to denote them and considered it derogatory to their status and position in the society.¹⁰³ "They felt that *Varnashrama Dharma* as understood and practised in Madras Presidency accorded a position of superiority for the Brahmins in the society."¹⁰⁴ To them this meant nothing but "the quintessence of the ideas of privilege, of superiority and snobbishness."¹⁰⁵ The Brahmins were noted for certain snobbish behaviour, which created a feeling of not only jealousy but contempt among the non-Brahmins. Apart from living in separate places, they adopted certain peculiar habits which made them rigidly exclusive. Eating with the non-Brahmins at the

same table was seldom found among the Brahmins. Perhaps they were conscious of some of the injunctions of *Dharmasastras* which "exhorted the higher castes not to take food and water polluted by the touch of the Sudras."¹⁰⁶ The high caste arrogance of the Brahmins and their snobbishness were reflected in every deed that they did. For instance, if a non-Brahmin was given water to drink, the empty cup or tumbler would subsequently be washed in his presence itself as a measure of purification. The very touch of the tumbler by a non-Brahmin would be deemed to have polluted the vessel. Hence the purification. This kind of open affront was taken by the non-Brahmins as a disgrace. The interpretation given by Rev. Robert Caldwell and J. H. Nelson to the term 'Sudra' through their works would have had its own impact on the non-Brahmins.¹⁰⁷ Further, ideas such as social equality and justice captured the imagination of the elite non-Brahmins. When they suffered humiliation and insult at the hands of a small section of people, they did not hesitate to show their resentment. Even addressing the Brahmins as 'sami' was condemned by the non-Brahmin leaders. *Dravidan* observed :

Many are the non-entities that live by eating the bread and wearing the clothes we give them and yet call us Sudras without any difference.... All our sastras declare that there is but one sami (God). But in our Dravida country all Brahmins are samis (Gods). The man who, in hotels, cooks and serves our meal is a sami ; the man who supplies drinking water on the railway platform is a sami ; the man who sells sweets is a sami and the man who cringes for alms is also a sami.... There is no reason whatever to call an idiotic and obstinate Brahman a sami. Therefore let our students and other Tamilians give up from today the bad practice of greeting the Brahman as sami.¹⁰⁸

The awakening of the non-Brahmins against the noxious tradition of caste superiority was very well visualised by poets like Bharathi who sang : "Gone are the days to call the Brahmins Iyers." It is true that the concept of Sudrahood aroused social awareness among the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency. In the early

years of this century it became "highly emotional", and got "linked to the concepts of Dravidian" and "Non-Brahmin", all becoming symbolically synonymous. That is, a member of the Justice Party would at the same time be a Sudra ... a Dravidian ... and a non-Brahmin."¹⁰⁹ A relentless crusade was carried on by the non-Brahmin leaders against the application of the term Sudra to all non-Brahmin castes. Therefore the virulent attacks of those leaders especially of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker on *Varnashrama Dharma* at later stages formed the basis for the radical tenets of the Dravidian ideology.¹¹⁰

9. The Greatness of Tamil Language and Literature Rediscovered

The publication of the book entitled, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* in 1856 by Rev. Robert Caldwell (1819-1891), a Scottish philologist and missionary, revolutionised the thoughts of both Tamil scholars and the 'emerging elites'.¹¹¹ Though it was a grammar work analysing the linguistic affinities of the Dravidian languages, it spoke much about the character of Dravidian culture. The author had propounded certain theories about the origin and character of the Dravidian culture.¹¹² The logical outcome of his theories was that Dravidian culture had a separate and independent existence before the Aryans invaded South India.¹¹³ He assigned a remote antiquity to the development of the Dravidian languages and regarded their structure as unaffected by contact with Sanskrit idioms. On the contrary, he tried to explain that a considerable proportion of Sanskrit roots was of Dravidian origin. He further contended that Tamil was the "most highly cultivated *ab intra* of all Dravidian idioms" and could dispense with its Sanskrit if need be, and it could "not only stand alone but flourish without its aid."¹¹⁴ The scholar established by his comparative study that Tamil literature was noted for its "sophistication both in its manner of expression and in the ideas that it conveyed."¹¹⁵ The views of Caldwell came not only like thunderbolt to the hitherto prevalent opinion that the cultivated Dravidian languages were descended from Sanskrit like the modern dialects of North India but also provided valuable facts for those who sought to

establish "the antiquity and the purity of the Tamil language." It can be rightly said that Rev. Robert Caldwell's works on Dravidian philology thus stimulated the Dravidian consciousness which lay dormant for centuries.

G. U. Pope (1820-1907), a Lecturer in Tamil in the Oxford University, was a renowned scholar in both English and Tamil. His translation of *Tiruvāsakam*, which contained valuable notes on the South Indian system of philosophy and religion was a monumental work. It illustrated the greatness of *Saiva Siddhantha* religious system. His thoughts on it were cataclysmic. In Note XI to the Appendix of his translation of *Tiruvāsakam* he succinctly explained its unique and meritorious features.

The *Caiva Siddhantha* system is the most elaborate, influential and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India. It is peculiarly the *South Indian* and Tamil religion; and must be studied by everyone who hopes to understand and influence the great South Indian peoples.... Caivism is the old prehistoric religion of South India, essentially existing from pre-Aryan times, and holds sway over the hearts of the Tamil people.

Further he observed that the Vedic religion was introduced into South India by the Aryan settlers. Consequently the inhabitants of South India adopted to a great extent their (Aryan) social institutions, myths and forms of worship.¹¹⁶ Harping upon the views of G. U. Pope, M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, in his book entitled *Tamil Literature* explained how *Saiva Siddhantha* system differed from Aryan pantheism. Its quintessence is as follows :

The *Saiva Siddhantha* system is the indigenous philosophy of South India and the choicest product of the Tamilian intellect. The system does not recognise the Aryan limitation of Siva as the destroyer, but considers Him (rather It) as the author of functions, creation, protection, destruction, grace and release.... This high and noble system based on the *Agamas* or *Saiva* scriptures, was corrupted by the puranic writers, whose sole object was to reconcile the *Vedas*

and the Agamas and, in so doing, to give the palm to the former. Hence the modern Saivism ... is full of the lovely creations of the puranic fancy and contains all the inconsistencies and improbabilities of the Aryan pantheism.¹¹⁷

The observations of these savants on the ancient religion of the Tamils had a significant influence on the non-Brahmin Tamil scholars who were stirred up to evince an active interest in knowing the glory of their own cultural and religious heritage. As a corollary, a good number of Tamil Sangams sprang up in various cities of the Tamil country with the avowed object of reviving Tamil language and literature. The most conspicuous was the one organised at Madurai in 1901 under the patronage of Pandithurai Thevar, the zamindar of Palavanatham.¹¹⁸ Its journal namely *Senthamil* did commendable service to the growth and development of the Tamil literature. Another Tamil Sangam which also strove to promote the study of Tamil classics, was the one established by T. Ramakrishna Pillai and C. R. Namasivaya Mudaliyar at Madras in 1907. The services rendered by these forums for the resuscitation of Tamil literature were remarkable.

10. Tamil Classics Moved from Palm Leaves to Printing

The Sangam classics were originally handed over from generation to generation by recitation. At a later stage palmyra leaves were used as writing materials. This practice continued till the introduction of the printing press. It is unfortunate that none, either scholars or local princes or zamindars, had taken any effort to collect those manuscripts and preserve them in libraries. They were in fact under the custody of private individuals who allowed them to be eaten away by moth. Because of this carelessness numerous volumes of literature perished. When the boon of printing press was made available the Tamil scholars felt the necessity of bringing the literary works written on palm leaves to print. In this respect the endeavours of Arumugha Navalar, Damodaram Pillai of Jafna and U. V. Swaminatha Iyer are praiseworthy. A large number of books of ancient literature which had fallen into oblivion had been rediscovered due to the earnest endeavours of scholars, which revealed to the world the

ancient glory, richness and splendour of the Tamil literature. It cannot be denied that it also brought about a great change in the outlook of Tamil scholars who "elaborated the picture of an early and once widespread Dravidian civilization, separate and distinct from the Aryan and Sanskritic."¹¹⁹

Of the enthusiasts who worked out theories regarding the antiquity of the Dravidians, P. Sundaram Pillai, Professor of Philosophy in Maharajah College, Trivandrum, was the foremost. In a famous essay on "the Basic Element in Hindu Civilization" contributed to *Madras Standard*, he expressed his view that "South India, and particularly the Tamil area, was culturally self-sufficient and could be independent of the arts and philosophy of Sanskrit and the North."¹²⁰ In his celebrated work, *Manonmaniyam*, a modern drama, he spoke high of Tamil language. He contended that it was Tamil that ruled over the entire world before Sanskrit came to the South.¹²¹

Another notable scholar who echoed the same sentiment was V. Kanakasabhai Pillai who, in his celebrated historical work, *The Tamils 1800 Years Ago* enunciated that the Tamils had attained a high degree of civilization before the advent of the Aryans. The theories, propounded by Rev. Robert Caldwell found explicit exposition in the writings of Tamil savants like Maraimalai Adigal and Somasundara Bharathi. They argued that the Dravidians were autochthons of South India and that they possessed a very rich civilization of their own before the advent of the Aryans. It "owed nothing to Aryan Culture but rather gave the Aryans a ready made civilization."¹²²

Among the Tamil scholars C. Subramania Bharathi occupies a distinct place. Though he was a Smartha Brahmin, he was against the orthodoxy of his caste. He never hesitated to condemn their so called spiritual superiority. In a letter written to the editor of *New India* he pointed out the Brahmins of today did not deserve any claim for 'spiritual superiority' and therefore they should "voluntarily relinquish all their old pretensions together with the silly and anti-national customs."¹²³ Further Bharathi

ridiculed in one of his poems the untruthful and greedy nature of Brahmins. Thus Bharathi, a revolutionary thinker and a poet who swam against the traditional current of the society, never hesitated to condemn the hypocrisy of the Brahmins even at the risk of social ostracism.

11. The Golden Age Theory

A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages of Rev. Robert Caldwell, the translated works of G. U. Pope, the editing and publishing of the Sangam classics due to the tireless endeavours of Arumugha Navalar, Damodaram Pillai and U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, the literary writings of P. Sundaram Pillai, the historical work of Kanagasabai Pillai and the lyrics of Bharathi—all collectively—contributed to the golden age theory that there was a hoary past with glory and grandeur in Tamil history. Emphasising the same theme several literary works in Tamil came into existence. They changed the opinion of the people both about their past and their future.¹²⁴ There was a strong belief among the 'emerging elite' that the Tamil society had lost all its past glory and splendour because of the Brahmins. The availability of a large amount of literature of the Golden Age not only inculcated in them the Dravidian consciousness but also reinforced the doctrine of dual cultures (Aryan and Dravidian) in the Hindu civilization.¹²⁵

By the second decade of the 20th century the cultural hypothesis that Tamil culture was older than Aryan Sanskritic culture was widely accepted. These theories which became popular gave the Tamil non-Brahmins both an identity and a sense of cultural self-confidence. A hymn of hate was sung against the Brahmins. They were blamed not only as strangers in the Tamil land but also as the destroyers of the Dravidian civilization. Further they were also held responsible for the present degenerate condition of non-Brahmins.¹²⁶ This dictum later became part of the programme of the Justice Party. In his welcome address at the First Non-Brahmin Confederation held at Madras on 25th December 1917, P. Theagaraya Chetti spoke as follows ;

The genesis of Dravidian civilization does not recognise difference between man and man by birth. The leaders of Dravidian thought, Thiruvalluvar, Avvai and Cumbar do not claim to be born from the brain of the god head. Nayanmars and Alvars do not claim greatness by virtue of birth. It is the Aryans who have introduced this birth distinction, which they have elaborated into the system of *Varnashrama Dharma* with its concomitant evils. It was that civilization which brought about illiteracy in the country, the pedestal on which is erected the exclusive oligarchy of the Brahmins. Its tyranny naturally provoked a protest, if not a revolt.¹²⁷

Thus the Justice Party was in a sense the political manifestation of the Dravidianist sentiment.¹²⁸

12. The Political Organisation for the Non-Brahmins— A Long-felt Need

The dichotomy of the South Indian society into Brahmin and non-Brahmin was the logical outcome of the cultural self-confidence gained by the non-Brahmin communities due to the articulation of the myth of Dravidian origin. Rev. Robert Caldwell in his works focussed on the Brahmin and non-Brahmin-Aryan and Dravidian—'divide'.¹²⁹ By the end of the 19th century a good number of young students from non-Brahmin castes evinced an increasing interest "in the pursuit of urban occupations, higher education, and urban politics." When they moved to urban areas, particularly to the city of Madras, they found the educational institutions, the politics and the public services preponderated by the Brahmins. A sense of disappointment and frustration naturally developed in them. "They also found something else even more disconcerting : a loss of deference and social status."¹³⁰ It was at this time the works of Rev. Robert Caldwell were taught in schools and colleges. It cannot be denied that his works had considerable impact on the 'emerging elite'. They also felt that the places and positions which legitimately belonged to non-Brahmins were usurped by the Brahmins and it was imperative on their part to make organised efforts to combat the dominance of the Brahmins.

13. Fair Play's Pamphlets

The twin remarkable pamphlets entitled (1) *The Non-Brahmin Races and Indian Public Service* and (2) *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Non-Brahmin Races*, written by an aggrieved non-Brahmin official with a pen-name 'Fair-Play' as early as 1895 were the earliest remonstrances against the Brahmin supremacy in public services. These works were in fact written in the form of open letters to His Excellency Lord Wenlock, Governor of Fort St. George.

The first pamphlet namely *The Non-Brahmin Races and the Indian Public Service* came out with an open accusation that the Brahmin theocracy in a modified form still existed even a century and a half after the advent of British rule. It declared that despite the fact that the British were called the rulers of India it was only the Brahmins who ruled it and the Indian National Congress represented only the Brahmin interests.¹³¹ Besides, it made a lofty plea for reservations in the Indian public services for the non-Brahmins in proportion to their population.¹³²

The second pamphlet which bears the title *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Non-Brahmin Races* is a weighty memorandum. It gave a scheme for the institution of a National Association to secure equalization in distribution of appointments in the public services among all classes of the people. Further it laid stress on the unity of the non-Brahmin races so as to enable them to emancipate themselves from the present unhappy position. It also made a fervent appeal to the princes, the zamindars and the gentry in general for starting a journal with a view to infusing 'continued exertion' into such an association.¹³³

These pamphlet were indeed the earliest manifestations of the long burning feeling of hatred, jealousy and fear felt by the educated non-Brahmins towards the Brahmins. The language in which these open letters are couched reveals that the author 'Fair Play' should have been influenced by the Malayali or

Travancore Memorial submitted to the Maharajah of Travancore a couple of years ago (1891). The very fact that the signatory of the first Non-Brahmin Manifesto, P. Theagaraya Chetti, used the tone of these pamphlets in advocating the cause of the non-Brahmins, bears testimony not only to their influence but also to the reality that the anti-Brahmin sentiment was neither a sudden eruption nor a new phenomenon of the early decades of the 20th century. Similarly Fair Play's appeal to the zamindars to start a journal to give guidance to the Association was really an anticipation of the role that the zamindars played in the activities of the Justice Party. But the hard truth that the scheme given by Fair Play had not materialised till the early decades of this century shows that there was no ready response to the pamphlets of Fair Play. However, the sonorous tune of the song of Fair Play was heard through the spate of letters which appeared in the columns of various newspapers. In an editorial in 1913 *Malayali* condemned the preponderate position of the Brahmins in political life and urged the non-Brahmins to organise an effective opposition to them.¹³⁴ *Madras Mail* which sympathised with the cause of the non-Brahmins published through its columns many a letter written by the non-Brahmin enthusiasts impressing on the public the need for the creation of an association for the amelioration of the non-Brahmin communities.

It is worth mentioning here that an abortive attempt was made by two Madras city advocates namely P. Subramanyam and M. Purushotham Naidu to organise an association under the nomenclature 'The Madras non-Brahmin Association' in 1909.¹³⁵ These lawyers made an announcement that they desired to enlist thousand members initially and hoped to accomplish it before the end of October 1909. Since there was no definite response from the non-Brahmin public, their efforts ended in fiasco. The lack of leadership from the influential section of the non-Brahmin community may be adduced as one of the reasons for the failure in forming an organisation for the non-Brahmins by these lawyers.

14. Madras Dravidian Association—The Precursor of Justice Party

The genesis of the Justice Party can be traced to the starting of a social organisation called 'the Madras United League'.

A few aggrieved non-Brahmin officials of the Revenue Board and other government institutions who suffered from the partiality and unfair treatment of their Brahmin superiors formed this association solely for the purpose of ventilating their grievances in respect of their prospects in their official career.¹³⁶ Among them, Saravana Pillai, (subsequently Deputy Collector at Tanjore), G. Veerasami Naidu, Doraiswamy Mudaliar (of Engineering Department) and S. Narayanaswami Naidu (of Revenue Board office) were prominent. Though the initiative was taken by a set of government officials to form an association for the cause of non-Brahmins, the leadership and guidance came from Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, a non-official, service-minded and popular doctor of Triplicane.¹³⁷ No sooner was it started than it captured the imagination of many prominent citizens of Madras including C. Karunakara Menon, the Editor of *Indian Patriot*, a popular English daily and P. Ramarayaningar (later the Rajah of Panagal and First Minister of the Madras State).¹³⁸ In the beginning it had no constructive programme worth mentioning. Before this League blossomed into a full-fledged non-Brahmin organisation, its nomenclature was changed into Madras Dravidian Association at its first annual meeting as its original name was not indicative of either its constituent elements or its purpose.

The association with the new name, i.e., Madras Dravidian Association started functioning from 10th November 1912¹³⁹ with new rules and regulations. In a short time, it became broad-based and many branches were started at various places in the city. Though its activities were confined only to the city of Madras, support to its aims and objects came from enthusiastic and influential non-Brahmin leaders from mofussil centres like Madura.¹⁴⁰ When the association grew popular, its membership swelled thereby necessitating the amendment of its rules at the general body meeting held on 5th April 1914 in order to give new orientation to its goal. Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar was made the Honorary Secretary and S. G. Rangaramanujam, a Barrister-at-Law, became the Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. It is not known who was designated as the President of the Association ; perhaps the Honorary Secretary performed the role of president as well.¹⁴¹

It is seen from the proceedings of the Executive committee that prominent Muslim citizens like Muhamed Ibrahim, a High Court Advocate, evinced interest in the activities of the Association.

The spectacular activity of this association was the annual 'At Home' to the non-Brahmin graduates of the year. This was the occasion which brought "the capable and brilliant young men of the community on one platform and introduced them to the elite of the non-Brahmin communities."¹⁴² The first congratulatory meeting of the new graduates was held at the Hindu High School, Triplicane, under the presidentship of Gooty P. Kesava Pillai, a veteran parliamentarian. R. K. Shanmugham Chetti replied to the toast of the new graduates. This function attracted many eminent non-Brahmin leaders of the city including P. Theagaraya Chetti and the Rajah of Panagal.¹⁴³

Another significant task successfully carried out by this Association was the running of a hostel for the non-Brahmin students at Akbar Sahib Street in Triplicane. This was a long-felt need of the students who went over to the city from mofussil centres for the purpose of pursuing higher studies in city colleges, as they were not permitted to eat in Brahmin hotels. "The establishment of the Dravidian Association hostel was the first practical step of a small but important group of non-Brahmins in Madras to organise themselves."¹⁴⁴ Since the hostel gave shelter to helpless Dravidian (non-Brahmin) students of mofussil areas, it was aptly called the 'Dravidian Home'. Among the students who stayed in the hostel, the most notable were T. M. Narayanaswami Pillai who later became the Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University and Subramania Nadar, who later rose to the position of a judge of the Madras High Court.¹⁴⁵ Though this hostel did commendable service to the non-Brahmin students, it was closed when the Brahmin hotels were thrown open to non-Brahmins.

Besides, this association served as a forum not only for the political leaders but also for literary figures. Under its auspices many literary and political meetings were organised. On 15th May 1914 M. Singaravelu Chettiar spoke on "Our Present Social

Needs". It is interesting to mention here that Mrs. Besant, who later turned out to be an arch-enemy of the Non-Brahmin movement, was invited by the association to deliver a lecture on "The Conditions of Progress" on 30th October 1914.¹⁴⁶

15. The Publication of Non-Brahmin Letters

The most commendable work that the Dravidian Association did was the publication of two books in 1915 which had tremendous influence in awakening the non-Brahmins. *Dravidian Worthies* was the one written by C. Sankaran Nair and the other was *Non-Brahmin Letters* by an obscure author whose identity still remains a mystery. E. F. Irschick considers these two books as the publication of C. Karunakara Menon. *Non-Brahmin Letters* is a set of 21 epistles, signed and addressed to different persons by name. The forms of address revealed the caste titles such as Reddi, Naidu and Mudaliar. Generally these letters portrayed not only 'the current feelings of despair' of the non-Brahmin communities but also reflected "the growing consciousness among educated non-Brahmin youth of their lowly position in the society."¹⁴⁷ They emphatically spoke out the disunity and the jealousy that prevailed among the non-Brahmins and condemned their foolishness in pursuing their traditional occupations without taking advantage of the western education. They had to blame themselves for not having high ambitions to occupy powerful positions in the bureaucratic service of the Government of Fort St. George.¹⁴⁸ They further disclosed how the non-Brahmins had become 'the victims of their own sense of inferiority.'¹⁴⁹ These epistles urged the non-Brahmins to organise a movement for their unity and progress and even pleaded for the establishment of a 'national' college making the Dravidian vernaculars as media of instruction.¹⁵⁰ Thus the publication of these letters symbolised the political awareness of the non-Brahmins that the establishment of an organisation to fight against Brahmin monopoly both in the field of education and in public services was the imperative need. Their publication was timely. There is no doubt that their influence on the educated non-Brahmins during the process of organising themselves into a party should

have been considerable.¹⁶¹ The Madras Dravidian Association had grown into a powerful and mature organisation of much importance. It was this organisation which prepared the ground for the emergence of the Justice Party. Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, who had realised the dire necessity and usefulness of an organisation for the non-Brahmins, was instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation between P. Theagaraya Chetti and Dr. T. M. Nair who were at loggerheads in the Madras Corporation Council. These two irreconcilable leaders, burying their hatchet and forgetting their old rivalries, joined hands to launch a movement for the mute millions of non-Brahmin communities. The two leaders were described as Sakthi and Siva of the Justice Party. Perhaps that is the reason why it was derided by the opponents as Chetti-Nair movement.¹⁶² But for the endeavours of Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, these two stalwarts (Dr. T. M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti) would not have come together and started the Justice Party. Therefore the part played by Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar in the establishment of the Justice Party is remarkable. He richly deserves to be called one of its founding fathers. So the theory that the Justice Party was started by non-Tamils is not tenable. As stated already, the Madras Dravidian Association had offered a political platform to non-Brahmin leaders like Dr. T. M. Nair even before the Justice Party was started. In this respect the Madras Dravidian Association might be rightly called the predecessor to the Justice Party. Thus "It was the intelligent anticipation of the Justice Party; it was the genesis of the latter in a true sense."¹⁶³ This point gets reinforced from yet another fact that the men who came forward to join the South Indian Liberal Federation were the group of lawyers and bureaucrats who constituted the Madras Dravidian Association. It may therefore be concluded that the Madras Dravidian Association provided a ready-made organisation to the non-Brahmin leaders to work further towards their goals. Even though the organiser of the Association, Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, gave heart and soul to the Justice Party, he had not allowed it to become defunct. It continued to function as a parallel organisation to the Justice Party receiving enthusiastic support from its leaders. In pursuance

of the announcement on 20th August 1917, Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy and Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, arrived in Madras on Friday the 14th December 1917 to receive the views and suggestions of representative bodies and others on the proposed reforms. Of the several deputations which waited on them, four represented the non-Brahmins of this Presidency. One of the said four was that of Madras Dravidian Association, the address of which P. Ramarayaningar read.¹⁵⁴ Its importance grew by leaps and bounds when Arcot Ramaswami Mudaliar gave evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee in London as its representative.¹⁵⁵ Its existence and active functioning were well demonstrated when Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar sent cables to several conservative newspapers in England emphasising the importance of communal representation to non-Brahmins in the present political context. The cable stated as follows : "Reform without communal representation will end in Brahmin oligarchy and tyranny, leading to trouble and turmoil, strife and faction." *The Times* published the cable of Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar on 29th August 1919.¹⁵⁶ Thus the Madras Dravidian Association functioned as a parallel political organisation to the Justice Party and remained as a force in the politics of Madras Presidency as long as Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar was alive.

16. The Last Straw that Broke the Camel's Back

The 'red-hot agitation' launched by Mrs. Besant for Home Rule created a ferment in the provincial politics of Madras Presidency and it "soon began to spread like wild fire from district to district."¹⁵⁷ Her success was solely due to her ability to provide her Home Rule campaign with ready-made machinery. As the president of the Theosophical Society she had a huge organisation with several thousand members at her command through which it was possible to link the capital of the Presidency with a very large number of mofussil towns.¹⁵⁸ Much more as a theosophist than as a political agitator she was very intimately connected with many of the leading men of Mylapore clique and got herself involved along with them in many cultural, religious and educational

schemes. She praised Indian religion and philosophy during the course of her lectures and speeches. "Hindusim was for her, an all-embracing faith, free from sectarianism, the real hope for the regeneration of India."¹⁶⁰ Her interpretations of Indian culture and religion were based upon the laws of Manu, and the explanatory notes of *Puranas* and *Itihasas* whose value was questioned by the 'emerging elite' since they had their misgiving about their bonafide.¹⁶⁰ As she was exclusively in the company of Brahmins and believed whatever they said, she erred in understanding the structural pattern of South Indian society. "She was in part a victim of the personal associations she had built in her Theosophical work."¹⁶¹ Therefore she turned a blind eye to the disabilities under which non-Brahmins were suffering and taunted them with attempting to pull down the meritorious and forward people.¹⁶² "By exalting everything Brahminical, by giving an esoteric meaning or scientific explanation to every unjust and oppressive custom prevailing among the Hindus, Mrs. Besant made an attempt to give a new lease of life to Brahmanical domination and oppression of other castes."¹⁶³ As the bulk of her enthusiastic supporters and key advisers were only Brahmins, they felt that their interests would be sufficiently protected by the Home Rule league if it emerged successful in attaining self-government. When her movement gained momentum, the Mylapore clique gave her all-out support. S. Subramania Iyer shouldered the responsibility of the Presidentship of her league when Dadabhai Naoroji turned down her request. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar was her counsel and G. A. Natesan and L. A. Govindaraghava Aiyar were her most trusted and loyal friends. Her close association with the Mylapore clique irritated the non-Brahmin leaders who nicknamed her as 'Irish Brahmani.'¹⁶⁴ Her followers, mostly Brahmins, called her respectfully Amma-Mother-since they would not mention her name. They used to prostrate before her.¹⁶⁵ S. Subramania Iyer and T. Sadasiva Aiyar were said to worship her almost as a mother.¹⁶⁶ Having enjoyed the support of a well learned and powerful group of Brahmins, she indulged in seditious talk. An American missionary had written to the District Magistrate of Ramnad describing Mrs. Besant as 'a growing

menace to the peace of the country' and expressed the opinion that her agitation should be repressed—otherwise there would be a big seditious movement again.¹⁶⁷ It is true that there had been systematic endeavours on her part to represent the government as 'foreign despots' whose 'favourite weapons' were the gag and the '*letter de cachet*' and to project the view that the rule of the British turned gardens into deserts. This kind of propaganda was bound to do grave injury to ill-instructed or partially instructed minds.¹⁶⁸ "When the Madras Government tried to take steps to deal with what it saw to be the rising tide of sedition it found itself shackled by the agents of Mylapore, who were now part of it."¹⁶⁹ It cannot be denied Mylapore was hand in glove with Mrs. Besant in all her deeds. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, the Attorney-General took steps to avert her prosecutions for sedition by using his influence. Similarly T. Sadasiva Iyer and T. V. Seshagiri Iyer the famous High Court judges, annulled the sentence given to her by the lower courts for sedition. By clever manoeuvres and manipulations the Brahmin officials made a large sum of government money find their way to the *New India* press to pay for advertisements. As members of the Corporation of Madras in 1915, G. A. Natesan and C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar were able to extend patronage either by way of appointments or assigning contracts to men of their own group. In the same way, G. A. Natesan established his influence in the Senate of the Madras University by making the European Syndicate dance to his tunes.

It is seen from the forces that were at work in 1916 that the influence and authority of Mylapore clique were something unsurmountable and its support to Home Rule league posed as a threat to the tranquillity of the country. It was therefore legitimately felt by many of the British civilians that "the enemy seemed to be already within the gates."¹⁷⁰ Besides, a few zamindars like Kumara Rajah of Vijayanagaram came forward to support the cause of the Home Rule league. It is accidental that a large number of mirasdars of Tanjore who were opposed to emigration of labourers drew nearer to Home Rule league since it "picked up the issue of emigrant labour and called on the government to regulate more closely and, in some instances, stop completely the traffic."¹⁷¹ When Mrs. Besant was able to mobilize force after force, the

British Government felt that her Home Rule league constituted "an extremely serious threat to the continued existence of the raj."

The British servants of Fort St. George perceived in the Home Rule agitation a potential danger not only to the government for which they worked but also to themselves and to their social position. The conciliatory attitude of Edwin Montagu towards Home Rule league made them feel that their superiors at London desired to sacrifice them to Indian political sentiment. It was obvious that they were against the principle of sharing their offices and status with the coterie of Mylapore.¹⁷³ They thought that non-Brahminism which was already coming into shape would be 'a counter-movement of loyalty.' Hence their encouragement and support to non-Brahmin cause. Instead of viewing it as their political strategy of 'divide and rule', it can very well be considered as a move to destroy the oligarchy of Mylapore group.

17. The Defeat of the Non-Brahmin Leaders at the Elections of 1916

The elections to the Imperial Legislative Council took place in 1916. The Madras Legislative Council had to elect two members. There were seven contestants.¹⁷³ But the composition of the Council revealed that a majority of them were Brahmins. The non-Brahmin leaders, relying very much on the false support of the Brahmins, had fielded Dr. T. M. Nair as a candidate against V. S. Sriivasa Sastri. The Brahmin members of the Council who were jealous of Dr. T. M. Nair's popularity and influence voted in favour of V. S. Srinivasa Sastri contrary to their promise. In the fray V. S. Srinivasa Sastri for the southern districts and B. N. Sharma for the northern districts emerged successful. Logically the defeat of Dr. T. M. Nair was considered as the defeat of non-Brahmins at the hands of the Brahmins.¹⁷⁴ Similarly P. Ramarayaningar was defeated by K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, a zamindar of Trichnipoly, in the election to the Imperial Legislative Council from the landlords constituency in 1916. Even K. V. Reddi Naidu faced a similar defeat in a council election that was held in the same year. It is strange to note that the leaders of nascent Non-Brahmin movement including P. Theagaraya Chetti

were all defeated in various council elections held in 1916 by men with Home Rule and Mylapore connections.¹⁷⁵ Even Brahmin leaders like Prakasam admitted that the selfishness of the Brahmins coupled with administrative authority was responsible for the defeat of the well-known non-Brahmin leaders.¹⁷⁶ Thus the elections of 1916 not only brought about disappointment to the non-Brahmin leaders but also aggravated the feeling of communal animosity between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. It was widely felt that unless the political power of the Brahmins was broken there would be no opportunity for the resurgence of non-Brahmin communities.

The significance of the outcome of the elections of 1916 was immensely great. The defeat of the non-Brahmin stalwarts served as a catalyst to organise a non-Brahmin party and the cry of Home Rule raised by Mrs. Besant and Mylapore hastened its formation. The non-Brahmin leaders had genuine apprehension that in the event of Home Rule the Brahmins who were predominant in every quarter would keep the non-Brahmins downtrodden and it would pave way for the revival of their supremacy of the days of Manu. In other words Home Rule would mean Brahmin Rule.¹⁷⁷ Further they felt that the unrestrained sway of the Brahmins might hamper the progress of the Backward communities.¹⁷⁸ More than the disappointment, "the fear of a Brahmin take-over of political power" if Mrs. Besant succeeded in her Home Rule endeavours forced the non-Brahmin leaders to think in terms of a political association for the welfare of their communities. It is apparently true that "the Brahmin leaders of the time failed to allay the growing apprehension in the minds of the non-Brahmins."¹⁷⁹ It was clear that they did not expect the walls of Jerico to fall.¹⁸⁰ Thus the Home Rule league of Mrs. Besant which was the nerve centre of the nationalist movement in Madras Presidency triggered off the Non-Brahmin movement.

(The Birth of the Justice Party)

The long smouldering fear and suspicion of the 'emerging elite' towards the Brahmins became institutionalised when

“ non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence both in Madras and in the mofussil ” met at a conference at the Victoria Public Hall in Madras City on 20th November 1916, and resolved to take measures to “ start a company for publishing a newspaper advocating the cause of the non-Brahmin community ” and also to form a political association in order “ to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the same community. ” Accordingly, a joint stock company was started under the name of ‘ South Indian People’s Association ’ for conducting a daily newspaper in English, Tamil and Telugu respectively, and a political association was also formed under the nomenclature of ‘ The South Indian Liberal Federation ’, whose purpose was “ to promote the political interests of non-Brahmin caste Hindus.”

The Magna Carta of the Non-Brahmins

The South Indian People’s Association—the joint stock company—issued the historic document—the great charter of the non-Brahmins—‘ The Non-Brahmin Manifesto ’¹⁸¹, addressed to the non-Brahmin gentlemen throughout the Presidency under the signature of its secretary P. Theagaraya Chetti at the end of December 1916. He was a great commercial magnate, the President of the South Indian Chamber of Commerce, the oldest member of the Corporation of Madras and an ex-member of the legislature. The publication of the Manifesto marks the inception of the Non-Brahmin movement. The reasons, objects and scope of the movement were clearly set out in the prospectus.

1. The primary purpose of the document was to define the attitude of the several important non-Brahmin Indian communities in the Presidency of Madras towards the Indian Home Rule movement, which the Manifesto described “ in trenchant language as an extravagant scheme, devised by the radical politicians of the Brahmin caste not content with having secured the practical monopoly of the political power. ”

2. The Manifesto laid emphasis that the non-Brahmins were not in favour of any measure which was designed to undermine the influence and authority of the British rulers who alone in the

present circumstances of India were able to hold the scales even between creed and class and to develop that sense of unity and natural solidarity without which India would continue to be congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups, without a common purpose and a common patriotism.¹⁸²

3. It argued with 'convincing statistics' quoting the evidence of Sir Alexander Cardew, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, before the Public Service Commission that the Brahmins were overwhelmingly predominant in the public services, in the University of Madras, in the High Court of Judicature and in all political appointments thrown open to Indians.

4. It asserted further that the non-Brahmins were 'strongly in favour of progressive political development.' It went on to point out that the Indian National Congress in its early days was a truly national institution. Unfortunately it (Congress) had become a sectarian body and it represented only the views of the social reactionary and impatient political idealists. Therefore the Manifesto gave a clarion call to the non-Brahmins to organise themselves in associations under the responsible guidance of leading non-Brahmin gentlemen for the advancement of the education of the non-Brahmin classes.

5. It concluded with an appeal to the non-Brahmins who formed not less than 40 million out of 41.5 million of the population of this presidency "to do everything possible to ensure the general development of their community on a broad and enduring basis and to quit their attitude of silence and inaction and definitely assert and press their claims as against the virtual domination of the Brahmin caste."¹⁸³

At the bottom of the Manifesto there was a note which requested non-Brahmin gentlemen who were "desirous of joining the movement to correspond with Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chetti, Tondayarpet, Madras or with M. R. Ry. T. Ethiraja Mudaliar, B.A., B.L., High Court Vakil, Poonamallee Road, Madras."

The Non-Brahmin Manifesto which bore the imprints of Fair Play's pamphlets was an eye-opener to many a non-Brahmin who remained silent over the caste tyranny to which the whole community of non-Brahmins was subjected. It was the beginning of a long struggle which the non-Brahmins waged against the reactionary forces for their uplift. It is unique in the sense that while the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement in other states of South India submitted memorials to their monarchs, in Madras a manifesto was promulgated.

Journalistic Onslaught

Some of the journals of the time characterised it as 'the still-born babe' and 'the product of cynical and diseased mind.' *The Hindu* which always carried a tirade against the Justice Party wrote on 20th December 1916 as follows :

It is with much pain and surprise that we have perused this document. It gives a manifestly distorted and unfair representation of many of the matters to which it makes reference. It can serve no good purpose but it is bound to create bad blood between persons belonging to the same great Indian community.¹⁸⁴

The attitude of *The Hindu* towards Non-Brahmin movement was extremely hostile. It wantonly refused to give publicity to any of the activities of this movement on the plea that it would lead to an acrimonious controversy. S. Saraswathi estimates that "this Canute-like attitude of non-recognition and the tactics of smothering a movement by blacking it out now appear politically immature and maladroit."¹⁸⁵ The papers like *Hindu Nesan* did not question the propriety of the movement but its timing ; it observed ; "We see no reason why such a movement should be started at this juncture when the Hindus and the Muhamadans have united together to ask for self-government for India."¹⁸⁶ *New India*, the organ of the Home Rule league, was the arch-enemy of the Justice Party. It described the Non-Brahmin movement as 'already a pent-up force'¹⁸⁷ and expected its premature death.

The dynamic leadership of Dr. T. M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti attracted not only 'the members of the emerging elite' but also many large landowners, mirasdars and zamindars and made them extend a solid support to the newly organised movement. A good number of bureaucrats and a group of lawyers who were originally members of the Madras Dravidian Association joined this movement.¹⁸⁸ To begin with, the Justice Party was thus composed of "a socially stable element of the urban population and a tightly knit elite."¹⁸⁹ Though the leadership of the party was vested in the well-to-do section of the society it acted in the larger interests of the community as a whole.

The Journals of the Party

The chief purpose of the South Indian People's Association—the joint-stock company of the Non-Brahmin movement—was to run a daily newspaper in English, Tamil and Telugu. The capital required for the undertaking was approximately a lakh of rupees. Till the end of the second week of February 1917 it was estimated that the promoters of the company had collected 640 shares (of Rs. 100 each)¹⁹⁰ and bought a press for about Rs. 40,000/-. Negotiations went on between the promoters and Karunakara Menon, the editor of *Indian Patriot* for the purchase of the paper and for his employment on a monthly salary of Rs. 350–400 as the editor of the newspaper. The name of the paper was to be changed to *Justice*, the policy of which was to be determined by the Directors.¹⁹¹ Six days before the date announced for the appearance of the journal *Justice*, the negotiations broke off. Karunakara Menon, who had agreed to edit the new paper by receiving Rs. 19,000/- for his press, withdrew from the bargain on nationalistic pretext. It was believed by leaders like Theagaraya Chetti that Mrs. Besant, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and P. Kesava Pillai were the people who brought about a break in the negotiations.¹⁹² The mantle therefore fell on Dr. T. M. Nair who had volunteered to be the honorary editor of *Justice*. P. N. Raman Pillai, formerly the editor of *Madras Standard* and M. S. Poornalingam Pillai, formerly the Vice-Principal of the Hindu College, Tinnevely, were appointed the sub-editors.

Theagaraya Chetti, the printer and publisher, issued a circular stating that the object of the paper, *Justice*, would be "to assist the educational, social, economic, political and material progress of the people of the presidency in general and of the non-Brahmin Hindu community in particular."¹⁹³ The first issue of the *Justice* was published on the 26th February 1917. It is quite interesting to note that Dr. T. M. Nair, fascinated by the name of the journal *La Justice* that Clemencieu, an outstanding French radical, edited, gave the same title to the newspaper that his party started. *Dravidan*, the Tamil newspaper of the party, which was started in June 1917 was edited by Baktavatsalam Pillai assisted by an able staff, consisting of Swami Rudrajotiswara, Pandit Vilvapathy Chettiar and a few others. Similarly, the party acquired a well-known Telugu paper, *Andhra Prakasika* (started in 1885) for the benefit of Telugu readers. It was edited by A. C. Parthasarathi Naidu, a veteran journalist, who was ably assisted by Raghaviah Naidu and Narasimha Rao Naidu. These journals did quite a lot to open the eyes of the non-Brahmin communities to the disabilities and injustices which they were forced to undergo. One remarkable feature of this movement was that a number of workers came forward to render steady and valuable services voluntarily to the cause of the party. Among them, T. Singara Mudaliar, a retired government officer, and P. Narayanaswami Mudaliar, a retired Municipal Officer, were notable. The former was devoted to the supervision of printing department and the latter to the secretarial work of the South Indian Liberal Federation.¹⁹⁴

Though subscriptions for the non-Brahmin newspapers and funds for the activities of the party were sought and obtained from a number of moneyed people and though within a year of its inception the Justice Party had collected nearly one lakh of rupees, its financial position from the beginning was not sound. Since the journals of the party suffered from acute financial distress, Theagaraya Chetti issued an appeal in 1919 to the subscribers to be regular and prompt in their payment so as to enable the Directors to tide over the pecuniary difficulties. Further, the cost of the paper which had gone up due to the war made the financial position of these papers worse. Under these adverse circumstances it became

painfully necessary to convert the *Dravidan* and the *Andhra Prakasika* into weekly papers. But for the timely help rendered by a few zamindars and landlords these organs would have met an early extinction. The Directors appealed "with confidence to every non-Brahmin official and schoolmaster drawing a salary, say, of Rs. 75 a month and more, and every non-Brahmin vakil, every merchant, tradesman and every landholder to subscribe for a copy of *Justice* and a copy of one of the two vernacular papers for the use of his family and thus ensure the continued existence and success of these newspapers and of the non-Brahmin movement."¹⁰⁶ *Justice* became a formidable political force in Madras Presidency within a short time capable of meeting any challenge thrown by its adversaries.

Was Non-Brahminism a New Phenomenon of the Present Century ?

The non-Brahminism was neither a new phenomenon in Madras Presidency at the time of the genesis of the Justice Party, nor a product of government policy as visualised by D. A. Washbrook. There was a deep social cleavage between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins from time immemorial. (The Brahmins of the Madras Presidency had retained an exclusiveness of caste orthodoxy.¹⁰⁸ As stated earlier, the diacritical differences that existed between these communities contributed to 'social jealousies' the manifestation of which came only in the beginning of this century. Besides, the Brahmins lived as distinct social group in a separate place called *Agraharam*. The non-Brahmins abstained from entering their houses.¹⁰⁷ A Brahmin in South Indian society was considered to be a different cultural being. The gulf between Brahmins and non-Brahmins was widening day by day. This was noticed by religious reformers like Vivekananda. He advised the Brahmin that the day for "privileges and exclusive claims had gone and it was now his duty to work for social amity."¹⁰⁹ Similarly the dominance of Brahmins in the public services was not a fact suddenly discovered at the dawn of this century. It was perceived as early as 1851 by the British bureaucracy which "suggested policies to check it and also took steps to arrest its pace."¹¹⁰ In the later half of the 19th century the administration

of the districts due to rapid decline of the powers of the zamindars fell into the hands of Brahmins who as Huzurs "acquired the perquisites and dignities of power."²⁰⁰ In order to prevent the district administration from being overwhelmingly dominated by the Brahmins, the Board of Revenue in Madras proclaimed an order in 1851 and it was famously known as Standing Order No. 128, Clause 2.²⁰¹ This order aimed at controlling the number of Brahmins in the revenue service of the government on the grounds that "nepotism was prejudicial to good administration." But the Standing Order remained only on paper for a long time, and it was not implemented till the end of the last century. In an attempt to enforce the Standing Order and to give effect to the recommendations of Public Services Commission Report of 1886, the Government of Fort St. George resolved to fill up certain vacancies in the Provincial Civil Service by open competition. But this was also a failure. Therefore it deliberately appointed non-Brahmins in government service from 1904 onwards only as a measure of social justice. Even then Brahmin preponderance in the Provincial Civil Service remained unsurpassed. This had been well revealed by Alexander Cardew, the then Chief Secretary, in his evidence before Public Services Commission in 1913, which Washbrook considers as something "loaded with vitriol against Brahman literati."²⁰² But it was a candid revelation by a senior officer of the nature of the Brahmin dominance in the Provincial Civil Service. He remarked that the Brahmin had maintained his lead in the Provincial Civil Service for the past 30 years. There was no sign of his losing such a position. He attributed further a racial characteristic to the intellectual superiority of the Brahmin. It was unlikely that it would be shaken except after an indefinite lapse of time.²⁰³ The very fact that Theagaraya Chetti quoted the witness of Alexander Cardew in the Non-Brahmin Manifesto shows that his views had created awareness among the non-Brahmins. The contention of Washbrook that Alexander Cardew and his colleagues encouraged the non-Brahmins to start the Justice Party as a counter movement to the Home Rule league is true only to some extent ²⁰⁴ As stated already, the agitation for Home Rule acted as catalyst and triggered off the non-Brahmin

movement. It was only the occasion but not the cause. But at the same time it is erroneous to say that non-Brahminism became for a time synonymous with anti-nationalism.²⁰⁵ What the leaders of Non-Brahmin movement advocated in the context of 1916 was an anti-Congress but not an anti-national policy.

From the beginning the Justice Party took up the attitude that it was for freedom, but before that was achieved the non-Brahmin leaders should take steps to see that power was shared equitably in the services and in other walks of life under public control.²⁰⁶ It is appropriate to quote here a striking sentence from Dr. T. M. Nair's Spur Tank Road address : "I will not be a party to leave the large mass of my countrymen behind and join a flying column in advance and march on progress."²⁰⁷ In fact, Justice Party wanted self-rule with proper safeguards for the backward class people and also for the Adi-Dravidas. Perhaps the anti-Congress posture of the Justice Party was viewed by the British as anti-national. "It was only more moderate than the Congress Party and it sought to attain its goal of full responsible government through constitutional methods."²⁰⁸ Therefore the theory of Washbrook that the non-Brahminism was for a time synonymous with anti-nationalism and a product of government policy is not sustainable. (Further, Washbrook holds the view that the Non-Brahmin movement from 1912 was a new political development, but at the same time he agrees that certainly there were status and cultural differences between Brahmins and non-Brahmins.) This cultural cleavage was given a political implication when a fear of Brahmin take-over of political power was generated by the Home Rule agitation. Therefore non-Brahminism was not a new phenomenon at the genesis of Justice Party. From the foregoing analysis, it can be deduced that the non-Brahmin feeling existed as early as 1851 and it found an institutional expression only in 1916 with the founding of the Justice Party.

To substantiate his theory, Washbrook further states that "the language of the non-Brahmin movement was closely related to the language of government." The Non-Brahmin Manifesto

spoke in an unambiguous language that the non-Brahmins were not in favour of any measure which was designed to undermine the influence and authority of the British rulers. Therefore there is no reason or rhyme to expect the Justice Party to speak a language of sedition or treason but at the same time it was also not prepared to approve blindly the policy of the British government. When the Home Rule deputation headed by Tilak was stopped from embarking at Colombo by the order of the Home Government transmitted through the Government of India and Government of Ceylon, *Justice* wrote a strongly worded editorial, condemning the action as an "instance of clumsy bungling". "To permit them to make all the preparations and to get through their demonstrations and shouting and then at the last moment to stop the deputation is undoubtedly more theatrical than reasonable..... wobbling about is an indignified proceeding, particularly in a government."²⁰⁹ In another editorial column, *Justice* criticised the same action of the government as follows :

The whole incident was the result of the ignorance of the Home authorities as to how valuable the Indian Home Rulers are as partners in the creation of calm political atmosphere. Who knows that before long Mr. Lloyd George may not take Mr. Tilak into partnership and create a calm political atmosphere in England in the same way as the Chelmsford-Besant partnership created the calm political atmosphere in India which we find very soothing.²¹⁰

On another occasion the Justice Party showed its resentment and emphatically protested against the action of the British government when it included two Brahmins—V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and Surendranath Banerjee—in the Franchise committee and boycotted it as a mark of self-respect since there was none on the committee to represent the views of the non-Brahmin communities.²¹¹ Therefore Washbrook's argument that the language of the Justice Party was very much related to that of the government is not based upon sound reasoning or logic. Further, he attempts to repudiate the views of earlier historians especially Hardgrave and Eugene F. Irschick with regard to the emergence

of Justice Party. According to E. F. Irschick the growth of literacy among the higher non-Brahmin castes was one of the factors leading to "a growing resentment at the monopoly of government office and public life enjoyed by Brahmins." But this view is contradicted by Washbrook who attempts to establish that the spread of English education among the non-Brahmin groups was not perceptible and that the proportion of Brahmin to non-Brahmin students had not varied in 1918 from what it was in 1890. However, he admits that the total number of students who entered the institutions of higher education had increased. This is a clear instance of self-contradiction. The table in page No. 49 reveals that the leading non-Brahmin castes such as Nairs, Chettis, Balija Naidus and Nadars attained appreciable progress in education. Even with regard to English literacy the non-Brahmin castes had made a gradual progress. This fact Washbrook tries to ignore by referring to the growth of literacy in terms of proportion. The following figures will indicate the tremendous growth of literacy that had taken place among the non-Brahmins during the period of 50 years 1870-1918. In 1870-71 only 36 non-Brahmins graduated from the Madras University whereas in 1918 the number of non-Brahmin students who entered the colleges swelled to 3,213 which was nearly 90 times more than what it was in 1870-71. To argue that "the spread of education among the non-Brahmin groups was not great" is nothing but a fallacy.

Another proposition of Washbrook is that "the Justice Party never argued for... 'fair' competition to allow qualified non-Brahmins the chance to break up a Brahmin monopoly." It was widely made known both in the press and on the public platforms by the non-Brahmin leaders that the Brahmins had developed a special skill in getting through the competitive examinations and therefore that they did not favour the idea of 'fair competition'. *Justice* had given a fitting reply anticipating the argument of Washbrook. "There is a class of men in this country (Brahmins) who ... to use Macaulay's expression, being obsequious toadies of British officials, consider that they are capable of administering this large country. These are the men who have followed no pursuit in life except cramming to pass examination."²¹² In another

editorial, the same journal assails the so-called intellectual superiority of the Brahmins : " If in proportion to their numerical strength the non-Brahmins have not availed themselves of English education, the reason is not far to seek. They have been for centuries the real producers, the lords of the soil and traders, and they cannot all of them leave their ancient callings. But the Brahmin has practically nothing to do but to prepare for examinations, and so the percentage of English educated men among the Brahmins is larger. " ²¹³ The leaders of the Justice Party wanted a fair share of government appointments for non-Brahmin communities as " they were the lords of the soil and inheritors of noble traditions. " They claimed it not because that government appointments would transform the non-Brahmin communities into the most prosperous of mankind but because they carried with them political power. ²¹⁴ Yet another criticism levelled by Washbrook was that the Justice Party " demanded a dropping of educational standards and the building of closed social categories of recruitment to be filled by non-Brahmins whether they were qualified and competent or not. " ²¹⁵ The Justice Party which advocated communal representation of non-Brahmins in public services pleaded for relaxation of qualifications for the appointment of non-Brahmins in government services. It considered it as a measure of egalitarian principle to uplift the downtrodden non-Brahmins. The foresightedness of the leaders of the Justice Party can very well be understood by the fact that the principle of communal representation has been enshrined in the Indian Constitution itself. Therefore the rationale of their demand for relaxation of qualification is undoubtedly beyond the scope of argumentation. The views of Washbrook are nothing but the projection of what the Congress leaders, especially Brahmin Congress leaders, spoke and wrote against the Justice Party in those days. His ideas therefore are partisan and biased.

Next, Washbrook questions the validity of the theory of religious and cultural revivalism which produced Brahmin-non-Brahmin polarisation on the basis that " the cause of vernacular

revivalism was aided at least as much by Brahmins as by non-Brahmins." It is true that Brahmin scholars like U. V. Swaminatha Iyer contributed their own mite to the revival of Tamil literature. But Washbrook failed to study the impact of their revival on the non-Brahmin communities. The discovery of Tamil classics not only exposed to the world the ancient glory and the richness and splendour of Tamil literature but brought about a great change in the outlook of the non-Brahmins. They believed that they were the descendants of the Dravidians whose culture was more ancient than that of the Aryans and it was destroyed by the Aryan Brahmins. They were condemned as usurpers and invaders. This kind of castigation was "a handy weapon for the non-Brahmins to beat the Brahmin with." However, when the myth of their Dravidian origin was popularised it gave the non-Brahmin caste Hindus both 'an identity' and 'a sense of cultural self confidence.'²¹⁶ The content of cultural-hypothesis was in fact not properly analysed by the Cambridge scholar who failed to recognise that the Justice Party represented the social awareness and intellectual awakening of the non-Brahmin communities in the second decade of this century.

It becomes absolutely necessary here to clarify a glaring misconception formed by sociologists like M. N. Srinivas as to the genesis of the Non-Brahmin movement. He is of the view that the Non-Brahmin movement developed a mythology of its own identifying the Brahmins with Aryan and the non-Brahmins with Dravidians,²¹⁷ and it created a cleavage between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. E. F. Irschick, who has spoken elaborately about the cultural revivalism of the Tamils in his *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, shatters the misconception of M. N. Srinivas by stating that the polarisation between Brahmins and non-Brahmins was born not out of a myth but out of belief²¹⁸ The people of non-Brahmin communities acted on the belief that they were the descendants of Dravidians and their interests were injured only because of Aryan Brahmins. "When the people are under stress the ideas become very clear and they are detached from the structural realities. This can occur in any movement."

It cannot be however denied that some scholars such as Poornalingam Pillai attempted to see in the conflict of interests between Brahmins and non-Brahmins a racial basis. The fact that the Brahmins of South India who projected themselves as the protagonists of Sanskrit, the language of the Aryans, is cited as testimony to the Aryan descent of Brahmins.²¹⁹ Now it is difficult to distinguish any section of people from others on ethnological basis in any part of the world. In fact there is no such thing as a pure race. However, the theory that the non-Brahmins were of Dravidian stock caught with the general public and the term Dravidian became a catchword in the political vocabulary of the non-Brahmins at the turn of this century. Therefore the Dravidian concept, the Non-Brahmin movement evolved was not a myth but a belief which became a reality. The castigation of M. N. Srinivas shows that he has no faith in reality of belief and the effect of belief on political action.

It may be concluded that the Justice Party which represented the first phase of Non-Brahmin movement was organised at the end of 1916 to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the non-Brahmin community. It was a movement for uplifting the non-Brahmins and a revolt against Brahmin ascendancy.

How is it possible for a belief to become reality? Belief is born out of faith and not out of reason.

CHAPTER II

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64. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, p. 24.
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83. *Non-Brahmin*, 28 Jan. 1917. (Madras NNR 1917).
84. Fair Play, *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Non-Brahmin Races*, (Madras, 1893), p. 18.
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94. A Pro-Nationalist Provincial Association.
95. *Non-Brahmin*, 17 Dec. 1916 (Madras NNR, 1916).
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105. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, *The Mirror of the Year*, (Madras, 1927), p. 144.
106. K. R. Hanumanthan, *Origin of Untouchability*, (Madurai, 1979), p. 41.
107. In their view the term, "Sudra" had been forced upon the non-Brahmins by the Brahmins from the North. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 280.
108. *Dravidan* 12 July 1917 (Madras NNR, 1917); Dharmu, *Blasted Hopes*, (Bangalore, 1951), p. 98.
109. M. R. Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, p. 22.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
111. E. F. Irschick uses this term to denote English knowing non-Brahmins in his article, "The Brahmin and Non-Brahmin Struggle for Power in Madras" (Memographed) p. 1.
112. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 278.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
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115. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
116. G. U. Pope (trans. and ed.) *The Tiruvacagam* (Oxford, 1906), pp. IXXIV & V.
117. M. S. Puranalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature*, p. 254, cited in E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 293-294.
118. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 281.
119. Spratt, *DMK in Power*, (Bombay, 1970), p. 4.
120. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 282-283.
121. "சதுர்மறை ஆரியம் வருமுன்

சகலமுதும் நின் தாயின்
முதுமொழி நீ அநாதியென மொழிசுவதும்
விபட்சாரமே "

—தமிழ்த் தாய் வாழ்த்து - மனோன்மனியம்

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123. M. Arunan, *Bharathi Kavithaigal* (Tamil) (Madurai, 1958), p. 178.
124. The letter of E.F. Irschick to the scholar, 26 Jan. 1981.
125. Spratt, *DMK in Power*, p. 6.
126. *Dravidan*, 26 July 1917, (Madras NNR), 1917.
127. *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement*.
128. K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944*, p. 12.
129. Interview with D.A. Washbrook on 28 Feb. 1981.
130. M. R. Barnett, "Cultural Nationalist Electoral Politics in Tamil Nadu, South India", in Myron Weiner and John O. Field, (ed.), *Electoral Politics in the Indian States*, (Delhi, 1975), p. 140.
131. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 20-21.
132. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
133. Fair Play (Pseud), *The Ways and Means for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Non-Brahmin Races*, Contents page.
134. *Malayali*, 1 Aug. 1913 (Madras NNR, 1913).
135. K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism 1905-1944*, p. 39.
136. *Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1968, p. 257. The year of its establishment is not known exactly. No documentary evidence is available.
137. Election pamphlet issued on behalf of Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar on 18th Feb. 1937.
138. *Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1968, p. 258.
139. The date is given as per the records collected from Mani, nephew of Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar.
140. *Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1968, p. 259
141. The photo copy of the proceedings of the Executive committee of the Madras Dravidian Association is appended.
142. *Justice Party, Golden Jubilee Souvenir* 1968, p. 89.
143. *Ibid.*
144. According to E. F. Irschick the hostel was started in June 1916 but K. Nambi Arooran gives the date as July 1916. But the records collected by the scholar disclose that it was started in 1914.
145. Interview with Dr. S. G. Manavala Ramanujam, former Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University.
146. K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944*, p. 43.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
148. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 46-47.
149. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
150. *Ibid.*
151. Interview with Dr. Washbrook on 28th Feb. 1981.
152. *Justice Commemoration Day Supplement*.

153. K.M. Balasubramaniam, *South Indian Celebrities*, Vol. I, (Madras 1934), p. 49.
154. T. Varadarajulu Naidu (Comp.) *The Justice Movement 1917*, (Madras, 1932), p. 66.
155. T. A. V. Nathan, (ed.) *Justice Year Book 1929*, Section IV, p. 18.
156. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 153.
157. B. S. Baliga, *Madras in the Struggle for Independence*, p. 8.
158. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 290.
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160. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 44.
161. *Ibid.*
162. Interview with Dr. A. Krishnaswami, Ex. M.P., on 30 Oct. 1978.
163. An Appeal to Labour M.P.s by K. V. Reddi Naidu and A. Ramaswami Mudaliar on 1 Sept. 1919.
164. *Non-Brahmin*, 28 Jan. 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).
165. *Fortnightly Report*, 17 July 1917.
166. Kesava Pillai papers cited in D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 289.
167. *Fortnightly Report*, 1 Nov. 1915.
168. *Ibid.*, 18 June, 1916.
169. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 291.
170. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
171. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
172. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
173. S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 66. The contestants were : (i) C. Karunakara Menon, (ii) B. N. Sharma, (iii) Dr. T. M. Nair, (iv) V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, (v) C. Vijayaraghavachariar, (vi) N. Subha Rao Pantulu and (vii) Nawab Syed Mohamed.
174. *Ibid.*
175. *Prapanchamitran*, 25 May 1917. (Madras NNR 1917) also cited in D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 298.
176. Prakasam, *A Political Study*, (Madras, 1971), p. 100.
177. *Swadeshabhimani*, 4 May 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).
178. *Mysore Star*, 14 Jan. 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).
179. S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 66.
180. Interview with Dr. A. Krishnaswami on 30 Oct. 1928.
181. The text of the Manifesto which has been appended was collected from C.R. Reddy papers, N.M.M.L., New Delhi.
182. *The Non-Brahmin Manifesto*, p. 3.
183. *Fortnightly Report*, 1 Jan. 1917.
184. *The Hindu*, 20 Dec. 1916 (Madras NNR, 1916) ; It is also cited in S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 42.
185. S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 42.

186. *Hindu Nesan*, 21 Dec. 1916 (Madras NNR, 1916).
187. *New India*, 6 Jan. 1917 (Madras NNR, 1917).
188. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 297.
189. R. L. Hardgrave Jr. *The Dravidian Movement*, p. 16.
190. *Fortnightly Report*, 16 Feb. 1917.
191. *Ibid.*, 2 Feb. 1917.
192. *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement*.
193. *Fortnightly Report*, 1 Mar. 1917.
194. *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement*.
195. *The Sunday Observer*, 1 Dec. 1957.
196. R. L. Hardgrave, Jr. *The Dravidian Movement*, p. 11.
197. “முட்டியுக்கும் பாப்பார் அகத்தை
எட்டிப்பாரோமே”
—தனிப்பாடல்
198. S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 59.
199. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
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201. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 220.
202. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 284.
203. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 223.
204. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 294.
205. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
206. Interview with Dr. A. Krishnaswami on 30 Oct. 1978.
207. *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement*.
208. B. S. Baliga, *Madras in the Struggle for Independence*, p. 14.
209. *Justice*, 8 Apr. 1918 (Madras NNR, 1918): also cited in E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 85–86.
210. *Justice*, 11 Apr. 1918 (Madras NNR, 1918).
211. Public Department (Ordinary Series) letters Nos. 1019–20, 7 Nov. 1918.
212. *Justice*, 16 Mar. 1917 (Madras NNR, 1917).
213. *Ibid.*, 29 Mar. 1917 (Madras NNR, 1917).
214. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1917 (Madras NNR, 1917) : also cited in E. F. Irschick “Brahmin and Non-Brahmin Struggle for Power in Madras”, p. 4.
215. D. A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics*, p. 276.
216. E. F. Irschick, “Brahmin and non-Brahmin Struggle for Power in Madras”, p. 2.
217. M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, p. 104.
218. Interview with E. F. Irschick on 22 Oct. 1980.
219. S. Saraswathi, *Minorities in Madras State*, p. 21.

CHAPTER III

The Era of Dr. T. M. Nair

The Growth and Development of Justice Party

Dr. T. M. Nair was the first patriarch of the Justice Party. A born hater of shams and superstitions, Dr. T. M. Nair inculcated a fighting spirit in every non-Brahmin, who, consequently, turned out to be a crusader against the pernicious social order of *Varna-shrama Dharma*. As a radical, he popularised the ethnic concept of Dravidian origin of non-Brahmins, which fostered among them a strong sentiment of cultural separatism. Like his co-sponsor of the Non-Brahmin movement, P. Theagaraya Chetti, Dr. T. M. Nair was an exceptional man with extraordinary political capacity. In reality both were 'political creators' whose determinations, decisions, political strategies and gestures and all the more, perceptions were the vital factors in shaping the political events of the Madras Presidency at the beginning of this century.

A Born Leader

Dr. T. M. Nair was a man of domineering personality with tremendous foresight. "A leonine face, a long curving moustache, massive chest, a somewhat portly figure and powerful arms made up his impressive physical presence. His intellect and powers

of expression were equally uncommon. ”¹ The profound intellect, the tough moral fibre and, above all, the matchless eloquence that he possessed were assets of no mean order. The bravery of a warrior and the brilliance of a scholar were the rare traits of his personality. In him were combined all the qualities necessary for the leadership of a party viz., “the valour of a soldier, the eloquence of an orator, the fervour of a missionary and the discernment of a scholar.”²

By profession Dr. T. M. Nair was a physician. As an ENT specialist he commanded an extensive and lucrative practice in the city of Madras. “Unlike the ordinary run of medical men, Dr. Nair’s activities were not confined to the surgeon’s knife and the physician’s pharmacopoeia but extended to the civic and political life of the Presidency.” Perhaps his close observation of English political life during his student days in the University of Edinburgh made him take a lively and consistent interest in the politics of Madras Presidency.³

The Captain and the Guide of the Non-Brahmin Movement

His great powers of organisation and advocacy were fully utilised for the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation. It is more appropriate to say that he was ‘the heart and brain’ of the Justice Party rather than its ‘architect’ since much of the masonry work was done by his ablest co-founder, P. Theagaraya Chetti. None the less Dr. T. M. Nair was ‘the leading light of the Non-Brahmin movement’. Though the historic document, ‘the Non-Brahmin Manifesto’ was issued under the signature of P. Theagaraya Chetti in his capacity as the secretary of the South Indian People’s Association, the militant tone in which the document was set reveals that it was the mighty pen of Dr. T. M. Nair which prepared the instrument. Besides the very fact that the rules and regulations of the Federation were drawn by him on the lines of British liberal tradition and French radicalism confirms his authorship.⁴ Though the policies and programmes of the party were chalked out by him in consultation with P. Theagaraya Chetti, he was soon recognised as its prominent spokesman. The accredited leadership of the party

devolved on him because of his many faceted personality. Even Theagaraya Chetti himself recognised his pre-eminent position in the party by referring to him as 'the captain and the guide' in his speech delivered at the First Non-Brahmin Confederation held on 25th December 1917 at Madras. He spoke thus : "Under his guidance we are already in sight of the land. May he be permitted to serve as our captain when we go forward on the work of conquest and occupation thereof."⁵ It is true that as the captain, Dr. T. M. Nair steered the ship of the Justice Party well despite a stormy weather in the beginning.

A Prolific Editor

Dr. T. M. Nair was noted for tireless and ceaseless work though he did not enjoy good health. In spite of the fact that he was the author of a treatise on diabetes, he himself suffered from the cruelties of that disease. It was learnt that his premature death was "due to complications of diabetes, Bright's disease, gangrene of the leg and heart failure."⁶ Still he was a man of indomitable will and undaunted courage. This quality was revealed in everyone of his actions. When C. Karunakara Menon refused to take up the responsibility of editing the new journal *Justice* in spite of his earlier promises, Dr. T. M. Nair offered himself to be the honorary editor. His bold venture saved *Justice* from being strangled at its inception without an editor. His training as a political worker in the Liberal Party of England under the leadership of Gladstone, his journalistic experience as the editor of *Antiseptic*, a medical magazine, and his masterly grasp of Indian politics made him an invaluable asset both to the Party and to the Journal. His command over English language was immensely helpful to carve a niche for himself in the field of journalism. His calibre to coin words and phrases was remarkable. The word 'Montford' is popular now in the constitutional history of India, but it was Dr. T. M. Nair who coined the word out of two names, Montagu and Chelmsford⁷. The nomenclature of the Party, 'South Indian Liberal Federation' and its organ *Justice* were his creations. *Justice* under his able editorship was believed to have kept aloft the 'banner of Liberty, Equality Fraternity and Progress' and outlived

all calumny, prejudice and diatribe of its adversaries. As pointed out in the earlier chapter, *New India* of Mrs. Besant and *The Hindu* of Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar carried tirade against *Justice*. They were hostile to *Justice* from the beginning and vehement in tarnishing the reputation of that paper by characterising it not only as anti-national but also as one that received government subsidy.⁸ But Dr. T. M. Nair was quick in replying his critics with subtlety and sarcasm. Indeed his mighty pen made *Justice* one of the powerful members of the 'Fourth Estate'. It received glowing tributes from its contemporaries on the eve of its first anniversary for the remarkable service it rendered to the underdogs. *Malabar Herald* on 9th February 1918 wrote as follows :

It is no exaggeration when we say that our contemporary has done excellent service in warning the ambitious designs of a Brahman oligarchy ; and had it not been for the influence it has exercised in bringing home to those concerned the real political needs of the Indian masses, as infinitesimally small clique of political agitators would have had their own way in undoing the good that has been done by the British rule.

Dr. T. M. Nair used the columns of his journal both for constructive and destructive purposes. He turned out to be an inveterate enemy of Mrs. Besant perhaps due to personal prejudices. He was keen on disclosing the 'ins' of the Theosophical Society. He therefore wrote in free style many controversial articles on Mrs. Besant revealing her antecedents in the columns of his paper. It cannot be denied that these articles which took later the form of a brochure entitled *The Evolution of Annie Besant* (Madras, 1918), told very much on her popularity and cut her off from her numerous followers. It must however be admitted here that both Dr. T. M. Nair and Mrs. Besant, in spite of their eminence and mature wisdom as political leaders and intellectuals, descended from their levels and indulged in vitriolic criticism of each other. Both had misconception of each other's movement. Though her vigorous Home Rule campaign with her Mylapore associates created a genuine apprehension of Brahmin take-over of political power in the minds of non-Brahmin leaders, their personal attack

on Mrs. Besant revealed their lack of political broad-mindedness. They tried to underrate the significance of her league in the politics of the Indian sub-continent, more particularly in the Madras Presidency, by over-emphasising the brighter aspect of British colonial rule in India. Home Rule league placed before the country a concrete scheme for self-government. As Christopher John Baker remarks, it "re-invigorated the Congress by projecting a demand for more Indian control over the new Levathan."⁹ Besides, Mrs. Besant gave a new style of political strategy—an agitational style—to the politics of Madras Presidency. Similarly her characterisation of Non-Brahmin movement as 'mischievous and unpatriotic' equally shows her failure to take cognizance of its growing strength as a formidable popular political force, challenging the preponderance of the Brahmins in the administrative services of the Government of Fort St. George. Her attempt to describe Dr. T.M. Nair as a 'writer with a savage pen' is a clear instance of her political ignominy.

The closing years of the second decade of this century witnessed hectic political activities in India. The nation was at the threshold of new reforms. It became a necessity on the part of the Justice Party "to formulate a political platform to combat the Home Rule policies of the Madras Presidency Association (a rival non-Brahmin party organised by the Home Rulers) and to make clear its desire for a constitutional reform."¹⁰ Having this in view, Dr. T. M. Nair penned a series of articles under the title '*Political Reconstruction in India*' in his daily. They constituted a rejoinder to the 'Memorandum of the Nineteen', drawn and signed by nineteen elected non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council and submitted to the Viceroy.

Dr. Nair possessed a versatile pen which was 'sharp, keen and incisive'. Normally it was pleasantly polite, facile and wily. His editorials in *Justice*, written in an elegant style, were eagerly sought after by readers. He used to astound his critics by sharp and pungent repartees. Thus *Justice* under the stewardship of Dr. T. M. Nair attracted a large number of subscribers and obtained a status of being recognised as 'one of the foremost

newspapers in India.' The journal had created a feeling among the Justicites that it had done its share in stirring the "peaceful pathetic contentment of the masses and in organising them so as to enable their sharing the great heritage that is in prospect."¹¹ In fine it became the mouthpiece of the Non-Brahmin movement. It cannot be denied that it represented the ideas of a new age and the aspiration of a new generation.

1917—A Remarkable Period of Mass Mobilization

The year 1917 formed a landmark in the history of the Justice Party. It witnessed not only the birth of three journals started solely for advocating the cause of the party but also a series of public meetings, conferences, lectures and pamphlets both in English and vernaculars in order to widen the basis of the Non-Brahmin movement. They were expected to disseminate the basic objectives and ideals of the party among the common folk of the land. The aim in organising conferences and addressing public meetings was to create a sense of social awareness among them. It was also a necessity on the part of the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement to clarify their political position through such meetings and conferences.¹²

Our Immediate Political Outlook

The lecture that Dr. T. M. Nair delivered on: '*Our Immediate Political Outlook*' under the auspices of the Muthialpet Muslim Anjuman at the Victoria Public Hall on 14th March 1917 was an excellent commentary on the policy of the Justice Party towards the Home Rule movement. The sum and substance of his talk was that Home Rule for India at that juncture could only spell ruin and disaster.¹³ In the course of his lecture, Dr. Nair made a thorough analysis of the prevailing conditions of India and suggested that the Indians must be trained for self-government. Further he made it clear that "India has always been and still is a mere geographical expression."¹⁴ He was also of the opinion that for Home Rule the people of the country must be sufficiently advanced in education so as to enable them to exercise their franchise prudently.¹⁵

Dr. Nair stated point blank that the non-Brahmins were entirely against the movement started by Mrs. Besant for Home Rule obviously because they were not ready for it.¹⁶ As a practical politician he made outspoken observations that the time had not come simply to trust the educated man and to say 'let him decide for us'. In his opinion the British Government had proved to be admirable trustees and representatives of the interest of the people and the people had received impartial treatment more from Europeans than from men of our land.¹⁷ The free and bold speech of Dr. Nair provoked a great deal of criticism complimentary and otherwise. *The Hindu* which had taken up the cudgels on behalf of the Brahmins described the speech of Dr. Nair as mischievous as it was an imputation of the grossest kind against educated Indians.¹⁸

West Coast Reformer writing a leader under the heading 'India's Political Outlook', appreciated the outspoken remarks of Dr. Nair on Home Rule for India and observed that educated Indians like the Rajah of Kollengode and the zamindar of Kurupam publicly dissociated from the Home Rule movement "for which a certain school of political faddists and fanatics are responsible."¹⁹ Similarly *Wednesday Review* remarked :

Dr. Nayar whose patriotism is not a whit less than that of any political leader in India is only anxious that his countrymen should have a correct apprehension of the realities of the situation without indulging in day dreams. He himself is a believer in the possibility of Home Rule for India, but he declines to believe that the day is come for it.²⁰

In the same tenor *Malabar Herald* spoke as follows :

The recent lecture delivered by Dr. T. M. Nayar in Madras on '*Our Immediate Political Outlook*' may be regarded as a bomb thrown in the midst of Home Rulers who are up at arms against him for the new political creed which he is trying to inculcate into the minds of the Indians. Dr. Nayar's lecture is of the plain-speaking type. The main point which he emphasizes is that India is not ripe for self-government or Home Rule.²¹

The Onward March

The address of Dr. Nair on '*Our Immediate Political Outlook*' at the Victoria Public Hall, Madras, gave a bugle call to action. The leaders of the Justice Party made strenuous effort in setting up branches throughout the Presidency and in organising conferences. The First Non-Brahmin Conference was convened on 19th and 20th of August 1917, under the presidentship of P. Ramarayaningar (later Rajah of Panagal) at Coimbatore. It opened on the morning of 19th at 9 a.m., in a theatre in Upanakara Street, Coimbatore.²² M. R. Kalingarayar, the zamindar of Uttukuli, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. On his behalf a welcome address was read by M. G. Arogiasami Pillai. The keynote of his address was that a scheme of reform should be formulated in such a way as to satisfy the aspirations of the people and at the same time it should not be considered as 'violent and catastrophic.'²³

In his presidential address P. Ramarayaningar explained the principles for which the Non-Brahmin movement was established :

Ours is as much a social as a political movement. We are anxious to bring together and organise the various social groups which comprise the non-Brahmin communities.... The high caste man and the low caste man and communities differing in faith must all be free to enjoy the benefits of British rule in equal measure. Towards this object, the first duty we have to undertake is the prompt and effective removal of the disabilities imposed on the low castes, especially the depressed classes in the name, in many cases, of religion.²⁴

While responding to the vote of thanks, Dr. Nair made a reference to the spontaneous co-operation extended by the non-Brahmin representatives in holding this conference and explained that the conference demanded only communal representation and further made it clear that the "non-Brahmins were looking to the British Government for protection, to hold the scales evenly and to meet out justice"²⁵

It was a happy augury and a strange coincidence that the convening of the first conference of the Justice Party synchronised with the memorable constitutional announcement of Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, in the English Parliament regarding the policy of His Majesty's Government towards the demand of the Indians for self government. Of all the resolutions passed by this conference the most important was that on self-government. It was proved beyond doubt that the non-Brahmins were of opinion that Home Rule might be adopted as an ideal to be reached through a series of progressive social and political reforms.²⁶ Some of the reforms proposed by them were even more drastic than those proposed by the Congress.²⁷ It was commendable that the conference pleaded for Indianisation of the offices now "exclusively in the enjoyment of Europeans so that the necessity for an increase in taxation would considerably be diminished."²⁸

The Coimbatore conference amply demonstrated to the people that "Non-Brahmin movement had taken root and was bearing fruit." It is interesting to know how and why the city of Coimbatore became a venue of sudden and hectic political activity. The Congress Party had decided to hold its conference on 19th and 20th of August 1917. T. A. Ramalingam Chettiar, an Advocate and a financier, who for several years was the Vice-President of the District Congress was a popular Congressman.²⁹ On the eve of the conference he moved on to the non-Brahmin camp perhaps to avenge "his failure to win an election to the Legislative Council in 1916" against B. V. Narasimha Aiyar, a Salem lawyer. He was keen and enthusiastic in holding the conference at Coimbatore itself on the very same days on which the Congress Party had proposed to convene its sessions.

The Bikkavole Conference

In the following months the Justice Party organised several conferences at various places. The conference held at Bikkavole in Godavari district on 27th and 28th October 1917 was significant as it attracted a vast gathering of enlightened non-Brahmins who

were so deeply interested in their future political progress. The Kumara Rajah of Chellapalli presided. M. Venkataratnam Naidu, Chairman of the reception committee, while delivering the welcome address, underlined the necessity of extending help and assistance to Great Britain through the Government of India in all possible ways to bring the disastrous war to a successful termination, since it was fought with "a laudable object of defending the weak and the poor and establishing righteousness and freedom by rescuing civilization from barbarism."³³

The presidential address by the Kumara Rajah of Chellapalli elucidated the various causes for the non-Brahmin upheaval and also explained under what circumstances the historic Non-Brahmin Manifesto was issued. The Prince spoke thus :

Their (non-Brahmins) unimportant position in society in services and at the bar, their continued defeat in public elections and their meagre representation in local bodies and in the legislative councils set their brains to think, and while they were in this mood, the war came on along with the bursting of the serious Home Rule propaganda. Conscious of their inferior position and want of influence, they were thrown into consternation by the reckless agitation and began to apprehend the consequences of the immediate granting of Home Rule. All these internal as well as external causes operated on them to move, as restlessness could not be put under restraint for ever. And so the pent-up feeling of years past at last burst itself in the publication of the famous Non-Brahmin Manifesto in December last, by which a good deal of commotion has been created in certain quarters, and in certain others the event has been looked upon as the beginning of a new era of brightness and enlightenment.³¹

He further explained the attitude of the Justice Party towards the demand for Home Rule and sounded a note of alarm :

If the British Government were to yield unfortunately to the cry of Home Rule and give complete self-government now, the whole country would be thrown into confusion by

the destinies of the millions of ignorant people falling into the hands of . . . selfish oligarchy (Brahmin) and it is feared that the anarchical outbursts taking place in Russia may be repeated in a peaceful country like India.³²

But he clarified that the Justice Party was in favour of another instalment of liberal constitutional changes though it was against the immediate granting of Home Rule. In his opinion the goal of self-government could be reached in course of time, step by step, as the people gained knowledge and experience.³³ All the more, the President, while rejecting the proposals given in the 'Memorandum of the Nineteen' as unworkable, suggested that the control of certain departments such as education, sanitation, agriculture, industries and corporation might be entrusted to the enlarged legislative councils, reserving the power of the purse and the passing of the budget in the hands of the Executive as at present. Communal representation according to the numerical strength and stake of non-Brahmins in this country was the key theme of his talk. Thus the conference of Bikkavole not only outlined the policies of the Justice Party but amply demonstrated that the non-Brahmin communities of this Presidency had been "roused to a sense of their own position" and to organise themselves to promote their social and political interests.

The Pulivendala Conference

The banner of non-Brahminism was carried on by the ardent and enthusiastic followers of the Justice Party to every nook and corner of the Presidency. One such corner was Pulivendala, a small town in the interior of Cuddappah district, where the non-Brahmin agriculturists and ryots hosted a conference on 3rd November 1917 under the auspices of the Justice Party. P. Doraiswami Naidu was the chairman of the reception committee and K. Subba Reddi, a Barrister at Law, presided over the conference.

The presidential address traced the genesis and growth of Non-Brahmin movement and clearly stated its aims and objectives: "The movement (Non-Brahmin) should, however, be

only a weapon of defence but not of offence, it must be communal but not anti-national, it should safeguard and advance the particular interests of a community but not endanger the general interests of the country." On the question of reform the President of the conference made it clear : "Self-government within the British Empire is no longer the shibboleth of one political party but has become the political postulate of all parties in India, not excluding the Anglo-Indian". He further said that the Indians were entitled for an irreducible minimum of political reform not as a reward for the help that the Indians had been rendering the Empire in the war but as an acknowledgement of their birth right as a nation to rule themselves. At the concluding part of his speech the President urged the non-Brahmins not to lag behind Brahmins in the demand for political reforms but to prove their true democratic instinct. But at the same time he exhorted them not to indulge in visionary dreams nor fritter away their energies in the 'proverbial wildgoose chase.'⁸⁴ Thus convening a conference at remote and rural places like Pulivendala by the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement clearly showed that the principles of the movement became popular even among the rural folk of the country.

The Bezwada Conference

The Bezwada conference which met on 11th and 12th of November 1917, was an important milestone in the long journey of the Non-Brahmin movement. The top leaders such as P. Theagaraya Chetti and K. V. Reddi Naidu were the organisers of the conference. The former presided over the conference and the latter became the chairman of the Reception committee. It was otherwise known as "The Telugu Leaders' Conference". In his welcome address, K. V. Reddi Naidu spoke on the object of the conference. It was convened with twin purposes : (i) 'to formulate a scheme of its own' and (ii) to lead a deputation to wait upon E. S. Montagu, the Secretary of State, during his proposed visit to Madras.⁸⁵ The main subject of his talk was communal representation. He explained why the non-Brahmins needed communal representation and how this principle had attracted the leaders of various castes and creeds. In this respect he

made a reference to the Andhra conference that met at this place a month ago, which "passed an elaborate resolution in which the principle of communal representation was accepted in all its details."³⁶ In the course of his talk, he emphatically denied that the leaders of the Justice Party were Brahmin haters and said : "We have no hatred towards anybody. We only wish to safeguard our interests. We are trying to uplift ourselves, not to injure others."³⁷

P. Theagaraya Chetti, the President of the conference, made a vehement attack on the preponderance of Brahmins in the administration of the Madras Presidency and pointed out that they (Brahmins) contributed neither men nor money to the war but claimed the benefit of the work done by others to press their demand for Home Rule. This attitude on the part of the Brahmins was nothing new. They had for centuries together lived upon the sweat of others' brows. Further P. Theagaraya Chetti elucidated how Brahmins obtained ascendancy in all offices, courts and schools with all the concomitant power by means of English education and explained why the non-Brahmins were against granting of Home Rule immediately. He asked : "What will be the position of the non-Brahmin classes if Home Rule is granted under these conditions ?" In the course of his speech he answered this question :

As long as the Brahmin official influence exists in the country, so long as the bar exercises influences on clients as it does now, so long as education is in a backward state among the non-Brahmin classes, the articulate class, viz., the Brahmins, have all the chances of success and the chances of non-Brahmins are practically nil. This is so far as the election to the Legislative Council is concerned. Surely it will become a close preserve for this class.³⁸

He further remarked : "It is a cry all over Southern India that Home Rule means Brahmin rule We want reforms, and we want them badly, but not on the lines proposed by Home Rulers."

At the end of his presidential address he gave a trumpet call to non-Brahmins to send one son from each family to an institution of higher education so as to outnumber the Brahmins in the field of education. He pleaded for the augmentation of our wealth : " It is our duty to send educated young men to different parts of the world to study improved agriculture and introduce improved methods so as to increase our wealth. " He alluded in his talk to the enterprise of a small community of Parsees who made the barren island of Bombay the premier city of India. " What was the cause of this greatness ? It is not the Sanskrit literature, it is not the world-admired Sankara's philosophy, it is not the political greatness that we are hankering after, which has made Bombay so great. It is enterprise, the enterprise of a small community of settlers, the Parsees." ³⁹ The speech of P. Theagaraya Chetti indicated that the Non-Brahmin movement aimed at the elevation of the oppressed non-Brahmin communities in all spheres of life and activities. His thought-provoking address had not failed to produce a reaction in the press. *Andhra-patrika* under the heading ' The Conference of Non-Brahmin Leaders ' remarked :

Persons like Sir Valentine Chirol, who were opposed to the aims of the Indians have now changed their opinions. But Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chetti, the President of the conference of the non-Brahmin leaders, holds opinions which are more retrograde than the opinions held by these persons formerly. His speech reiterates what the unsympathetic Anglo-Indian historians have written. ⁴⁰

The Tamil Leaders' Conference at Tinnevely

The non-Brahmin leaders of the Southern Tamil districts of Tinnevely. Ramand and Madura hosted a conference under the auspices of the Justice Party on 30th November and 1st December, 1917. In his welcome address, the zamindar of Singampatti, who was also the chairman of the Reception committee laid emphasis on communal representations as one of the cardinal principles to protect " the interests of the voiceless backward

millions against the aggrandisement of the advanced minority."⁴¹ But at the same time he had not failed to impress upon the audience that communal representation alone could not uplift the non-Brahmins from their present state of backwardness. They should therefore help themselves towards attaining equality with their 'Aryan brothers' and this object could be easily achieved by diffusing education, general and industrial, among themselves. He mooted the idea of creating an educational fund called 'The Dravidian Amelioration Fund' by 'voluntary contributions from all Dravidians, high or low' and it was to be collected periodically by local communities in all villages on all festive occasions as well as during marriages and other domestic festivities. "This fund, the speaker said, might be utilised for granting scholarships to deserving Dravidian students of high schools and colleges and for promoting higher, special, scientific or technical education of such students in India as well as in foreign countries."⁴² By implementing this scheme the chairman of the Reception committee believed that the elevation of the Dravidian communities would become a possibility.

The zamindar of Telaprole presided over the conference. In his Presidential address he made a reference to the Indian National Congress at the outset and narrated how it was swarmed by the Extremists in 1916 after the lamented death of Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta and as a result, the great Indian political organisation became a pathetic victim of the most undesirable elements who styled themselves as Home Rulers. They were none but Brahmins. Therefore the Home Rule, advocated by those undesirable elements would be Brahmin rule in its worst form.⁴³

The speaker made a stout defence against the accusation of the Home Rulers that the Non-Brahmin movement created class hatred. He spoke thus :

The leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement did not create class hatred. They found it existing in a most dangerous form, they have only brought it out to the full light of the day with a view to cure it in the most rational manner.

No statesman, who has to deal with the destinies of India, can afford to ignore the significance of the Non-Brahmin movement. It is a demand for social justice, equal opportunities to all, equality between man and man in the eyes of the governing authority. No solution of the political problem of India will be wise and lasting which does not recognise the justice of the non-Brahmin claims. To ignore them would be unstatesmanlike, to suppress them would lay the foundation for future revolution, and the only method of dealing with them will be to face them courageously and deal with them with sympathy and justice. This movement cannot be killed by vituperation, misrepresentation or ridicule. It has got enough vitality to survive the adverse Home Rule influence which are now trying to destroy it."⁴⁴

Endorsing the views of the zamindar of Telaprole *Dravidan* observed: "It will not be fair for the English Government to leave the majority of the people in this country against their will, in the hands of the avaricious Brahmins."⁴⁵

The Salem Conference

In the beginning of December 1917, a conference of South Indian Liberal Federation under the presidentship of K. S. Dora Rajah of Pudukkottah was convened at Salem. The President in his speech outlined the policy and the method of the South Indian Liberal Federation in a succinct manner as follows :

The members of the Liberal Federation are averse to any violent and sudden constitutional changes which will impair the authority of the British Government to which they look for holding the scales even between class and class. They are, however, strongly in favour of progressive political development of a well-defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. The time for the grant of complete self-government to India has not yet come. This is a time for preparation to attain that goal."⁴⁶

The address of K. S. Dora Rajah incited the anger of pro-Home Rule papers like *Swadeshmitran* which accused him that he was imbued with a feeling of caste hatred which would create numerous divisions among Indians.⁴⁷

The First Confederation of the Justice Party

The First Annual Confederation of the Justice Party,⁴⁸ which met on 28th December 1917 in the Wellington Theatre, Mount Road, Madras, marked a definite and significant stage in the growth and development of the Non-Brahmin movement. P. Theagaraya Chetti was the Chairman of the Reception committee and the Rajah of Venkatagiri presided over the Confederation.

The welcome address of P. Theagaraya Chetti constituted a historical document by itself and it narrated the landmarks of the party from its inception such as the starting of the South Indian People's Association, the issuing of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto, the purchasing of a printing press to publish *Justice*, the organ of the party in English, and the other vernacular journals of the party namely *Dravidan* in Tamil and *Andhraprakasika* in Telugu and the holding of conferences at various places of this Presidency. While taking stock of the work done by the party, P. Theagaraya Chetti remarked :

The South Indian Liberal Federation, though formed in December last, began its work only in August and during the four months of its existence, non-Brahmin District conferences have been held at Coimbatore, Biccavole and Pulivendla and group conferences have been held at Bezwada and Tinneveli respectively, the former representing the six coastal districts of Northern circars and the latter the districts of Madras, Ramnad and Tinneveli. Rarely three weeks have passed since a conference was held in Salem. These conferences serve as milestones marking the several stages in the progress of the Non-Brahmin movement.⁴⁹

The speed with which the non-Brahmin leaders organised conferences over the Presidency shows how enthusiastic they were

and how popular the creed of non-Brahminism was among the people of the Madras Presidency. If it was a movement engineered by the British bureaucrats as alleged by Washbrook it would not have made so rapid a progress within a span of hardly a year. The fact that the movement was able to surmount the obstacles that it had encountered on its journey and outlived misrepresentations, vituperation and calumny to which it had been subjected reveals its strength and popularity.

When P. Theagaraya Chetti spoke on the aims of the Party he categorically stated the members of his party were opposed to violent changes in the administration of the country and equally against the concentration of administrative power in a single community and against all attempts to make the character of the government un-British.⁵⁰ But at the same time he reiterated that they did want 'a steady and sure advancement in political life.' Dr. Nair who spoke in a similar vein at the concluding part of the confederation echoed what P. Theagaraya Chetti stated earlier. "The non-Brahmins were most emphatically for political progress but they wanted that progress to be careful and gradual. They did not want to progress at a break-neck speed."⁵¹

Dr. Nair came out with a great accusation against the Home Rulers. He discerned in their agitation the invisible hand of the Germans. It was his contention that they (Home Rulers) intensified their Home Rule agitation only after the outbreak of the war and it was only due to 'German machinations and intrigues'. He further observed :

The Germans had spent enormous sums and organised the Indians in America and sent them by successive batches to India, and in 1915, they very nearly created a rebellion in the Punjab where, on a particular night, all the arsenals were to be captured by the rebels.

It was announced in the House of Commons that Lala Lajpat Rai was connected with the German intriguers and the Home Secretary asked the Government to investigate and find out the exact extent of the German machinations in India.⁵²

We cannot reject the contention of Dr. Nair as baseless in the light of the political development in Madras Presidency during the tense days of the war. It is not known why Mrs. Besant who had been pedalling soft all along suddenly plunged herself in red-hot agitation and why the Government of Fort St. George under Lord Pentland adopted very harsh and repressive measures against her movement despite its commitment to conciliatory policy.

With regard to the castigation that the Non-Brahmin movement had been started distinctly with official support and guidance, Dr. Nair reiterated that 'the statement was a Brahminical lie.'⁵³ Further, he emphatically asserted that non-Brahmins were not puppets in the hands of officials and *Justice*, the organ of the non-Brahmins, was not a subsidised one. The paper had not received a pie of subsidy in the past from any quarter and had no intention of asking for any in the future. The Non-Brahmin movement wanted absolutely no official support. He spoke with confidence that he himself could guide the political movement without any guidance from officials as well as Mr. Kasthuriranga Iyengar (the Editor of the *Hindu*), could. "The non-Brahmins came out openly at the present juncture to express their disapproval of the break-neck speed at which Brahmins wanted to proceed."⁵⁴ In his earlier speech delivered at the Coimbatore conference he reiterated the same thing. "Nobody had engineered their movement excepting the Directorate of the South Indian People's Association. They did not require any outside engineering, they could stand on their own legs and they could command enough brains to carry on their own movement."⁵⁵

The conferences that the leaders of the Justice Party organised during 1917 served as platforms for the Party to elaborate the doctrine of non-Brahminism enshrined in the famous Non-Brahmin Manifesto. The fact that they carried on their political propaganda against the Home Rule agitation and the Brahmin dominated Congress without any hitch is an ample testimony to the powers of the organisation of the South Indian Liberal Federation. The Justice Party had become a formidable political force. In fact the discipline and the obedience to the command of the

leaders such as Dr. T.M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti the rank and file of the Party had shown in the beginning, helped the movement make rapid strides towards its cherished goals.

The Spur Tank Meeting

The most significant of all the meetings organised by the leaders of the Justice Party during 1917 was that of the *Panchamas* held at Spur Tank on 7th October 1917.⁵⁶ Dr. T. M. Nair, who had genuine sympathy for the welfare of the *panchamas*, was keen on mobilising their support in favour of his party. Nevertheless, the meeting was organised at the instance of a few *panchamas*. The presidential chair of the meeting was given to Dr. Nair who spoke in English which was translated into Tamil by Somasundaram Pillai. During the course of his address, he made a virulent attack against 'the curse of untouchability' and accused the Brahmins (the people of superior caste) of having kept the *Panchamas* under age-long servility. He appealed to them rather fervently to assert their position and claim equality with others. While pleading for the progress of all communities he remarked : "I will not be a party to leaving a large mass of my countrymen behind and join a small flying column in the advance and march on in the name of progress."⁵⁷

The quintessence of his talk was that until all the members of the community of the *Panchamas* were educated and brought to a condition when they could realise their responsibility and use their votes in a discriminating manner, the British power must remain and continue "to hold the scales even between classes" instead of leaving them to the tender mercies of the so-called superior castes (Brahmins) in this country.⁵⁸ At the concluding part of his speech Dr. Nair stressed the necessity of organising a committee of the *Panchamas* for being in touch with every member of the *Panchama* community in the city of Madras and for seeking advice and freindship of the Justice Party in order to keep pace with the progress of other communities.⁵⁹ To the surprise of Dr. Nair and other speakers Anchas, the President of the Pariah Mahajanah Sabha, who also spoke at the meeting, expressed his

distrust in the leadership of the Justice Party in championing the cause of the *Panchamas* even though he decried at the demand of Home Rule. He wanted the non-Brahmin leaders of the Justice Party to treat the *Panchamas* as their brethren if they really wanted to lead them.⁶⁰

The Spur Tank meeting revealed Dr. Nair as a real champion of the *Panchamas* and a true liberal politician of the day. His personal life was a marvellous example of perfect social equality of all classes. He employed *Panchamas* to work in his house, and moved with them in a spirit of brotherhood and equality. Even before the Congress leaders like Gandhi spoke of the uplift of the Depressed classes (Harijans), Dr. Nair organised a forum for them and voiced their grievances. He firmly believed that without the *Panchamas* "taking their proper and right share in the governance of the country and in every sphere of national activity, the future of India was indeed gloomy." The same principle became one of the declared social policies of the Justice Party.⁶¹ The activities of the Justice Party were criticised in biting language by *Desa-bhaktan*, the organ of the Madras Presidency Association,⁶² which observed "those non-Brahmin brethren (members of the Justice Party)... are now deceiving the people by holding small conferences here and there under the presidency of a few zamindars who have no experience whatever of political work and passing certain resolutions."⁶³

From the foregoing analysis it is evident that the programme of the Justice Party was well-planned. In a period of four months, i.e., from August to December in 1917, it had organised four district conferences and two group conferences apart from holding several meetings at various places throughout the length and breadth of the Presidency. To brand it as a party of zamindars, was a clear instance of vituperation. It is a fact that a few zamindars took active interest in the various programmes of the party. They were the people who formed not only the nucleus of the elitist group but also the most articulate section among the non-Brahmins. Had they not come forward to champion the cause of the non-Brahmins it would have also had a premature death

like Madras Presidency Association. Therefore the criticism of *Desabhaktan* was not in any way based on reason or rhyme.

Mobilisation of Political Forces on the Eve of Montagu's Mission to Madras

The historic announcement⁶⁴ of Montagu, the Secretary of State, in the House of Commons on 20th August 1917, that the policy of His Majesty's Government was to associate Indians in every branch of the administration and to foster self-governing institutions "with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire", created a spur of political activities in Madras Presidency though it excited some surprise and aroused little opposition in England. In fact this declaration was extracted by Montagu, a staunch Liberal, from an indifferent and reluctant war cabinet.⁶⁵ It was a liberal political gesture by a conservative government. Besides it was also assured on the floor of the House, that there would be "a free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority in England and in India, and ample opportunity would be afforded for public discussion of the proposals to be submitted, in due course, to Parliament. It thus envisaged a gradual transfer of authority to Indian hands."⁶⁶

The mobilisation of political interests in the Madras Presidency was a natural sequence of the announcement as the leaders of various political parties felt that it was time to press their claims for power under the new constitutional set-up.⁶⁷ A calm and placid province had been thrown into a whirlpool of communal animosity.

The English Business Community

The sudden swing of the policy of the British Government towards India gave a jolt to the English business community of Madras, who considered the declaration of Montagu as 'a serious threat to their position.' In their anxiety to have their sway established in the colonial set-up, they readily gave encouragement and help to the non-Brahmins in the Justice Party which strongly

pleaded for the retention of the British power in India.⁶⁸ The British business community in Madras found in T.E. Welby, the editor of the English daily, *Madras Mail*, a most articulate spokesman who in his editorial carried a tirade against Mrs. Besant, condemning her 'red-hot' agitation as traitorous. This was the common ground where the non-Brahmins of the Justice Party and the British business group of Madras met. The release of Mrs. Besant, though "hailed as the conquest of Indian nationalistic feeling over the bureaucratic forces in Madras", was looked on by Welby with considerable unpleasantness. He saw in her liberation Montagu's willingness to please the South Indian Brahmin lawyer politicians. His paper *Madras Mail* did not hesitate to attribute racial motive to his action. Since he was a Jew, he was suspected of indirectly helping the Brahmins to position of power and authority.⁶⁹

The Madras Presidency Association

The followers of Mrs. Besant, who were mostly Brahmins, displayed their animosity towards the non-Brahmins of the Justice Party in a most distinct way. They organised a rival non-Brahmin association namely the Madras Presidency Association with the help of Gooty P. Kesava Pillai and Lord Govind Doss as an auxiliary body of the Home Rule league. It was obviously started to counterbalance the growing strength of the non-Brahmins of the Justice Party in the politics of the Madras Presidency, in the name of nationalism and to impress upon the impending mission of Montagu that the Justice Party was not the only and all comprehensive party of the non-Brahmins of Madras and that it also represented the aspirations of the non-Brahmin communities. Nevertheless, Marguerite Ross Barnett reasons out for the emergence of the Madras Presidency Association that the Justice Party created a political category called 'non-Brahmin' which so "fundamentally altered perceptions about the Madras political arena that non-Brahmins in Congress felt the need to organise around that affiliation."⁷⁰ In the same way D. J. Arnold attributes that the Madras Presidency Association emerged only due to the rift that arose within the Congress in Madras. It appears that the cable that Theagaraya Chetti gave to Montagu stating that the

non-Brahmins did not like the release of Mrs. Besant, became a strategem for the non-Brahmin sympathisers of the Home Rule league to organise the Madras Presidency Association under the presidentship of P. Kesava Pillai. In the beginning though it functioned only as a cultural society, it gained political importance later as a non-Brahmin wing of the Home Rule movement. It appealed to the Dravidians to rally round the Home Rule league. Its aims and objectives were almost the same as those of the Justice Party despite the difference in their tone and temperament.

The immediate objective of the Madras Presidency Association was "to forward a scheme to ensure full communal representation to non-Brahmins but without in any way breaking ranks with the freedom movement."⁷¹ The leaders of the Madras Presidency Association started to construct a parallel organisational structure along with the Congress. With its headquarters at Madras, they established branches in mofussil centres. Before the end of December 1917 they claimed to have enlisted a membership of 2,000 though *The Hindu* in its editorial dated 14th December 1917 gave the figure as 800.⁷² The composition of the Madras Presidency Association reveals that it has also emerged from the same socio-economic groups which constituted the Justice Party, namely the elite and the middle class non-Brahmins. Irschick points out the difference between the Justice Party and the Madras Presidency Association by indicating that only a few zamindars and large landowners supported the latter.

The leaders of the Madras Presidency Association enlisted the support of C. Karunakara Menon, the editor of *Indian Patriot*, and once an opponent of Mrs. Besant, to promote the interests of their party through his paper. Similarly T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, an young versatile Tamil scholar and a journalist, rendered immeasurable services to the Madras Presidency Association by writing articles in his paper, *Deshabhaktan*.⁷³ Thus the Madras Presidency Association directed its entire energy in writing lampoon against the Justice Party. It ridiculed its counterpart as a puppet of the British bureaucracy. In turn, the Justice Party stigmatised the Madras Presidency Association as a tool of the

Brahmins. To counter the accusation of the Justice Party, the Madras Presidency Association quickly reversed its initial opposition to communal representation. In its First Annual Conference held on 22nd December 1917 several resolutions were adopted on various themes indicating its policies. One such resolution which showed its changed attitude was proposed by K. Koti Reddi. It runs as follows :

That this conference whole-heartedly supports the principles of the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms and insists on adequate representation also of all communities other than Brahmins and all interests in the legislative and other bodies to be constituted under the scheme and earnestly urges that the Governments of Great Britain and India should grant the reforms at an early date as they are of imperative necessity for the welfare and contentment of the people of India and thus serve the best interests of the empire.⁷⁴

This changed posture and strategy of the Madras Presidency Association was largely due to the pressure of a few influential persons in the Congress such as E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, P. Varadarajulu Naidu and V. Chakkarai Chetti. Nevertheless, its stubborn hostility towards the Justice Party and its premature demise along with the parent body after the introduction of Montford Reforms clearly indicate that it was engineered by Brahmin Home Rulers. As Barnett remarks, while it existed the Madras Presidency Association reflected intra-Congress elite non-Brahmin-Brahmin cleavage.⁷⁵ The mutual differences that characterised the relations between the Madras Presidency Association and the Justice Party on the other hand amply revealed the weakness of the non-Brahmin concept.⁷⁶

The Justice Party, having been committed to the principle of communal representation from the beginning, was anxious to demonstrate its position as the sole representative of the South Indian non-Brahmins before Montagu. Its leader, T. M. Nair, laid emphasis that the Madras Presidency Association was an organisation formed by Home Rule and Congress interests with a view to create the impression that the non-Brahmin feeling was in

harmony with the attitudes of the advanced Brahmins.⁷⁷ Both the organisations inspite of their basic differences agreed on the necessity of insisting on communal representation for the non-Brahmins in the ensuing reforms. The only matter where both of them clashed violently was the demand for Home Rule.⁷⁸

Montagu's Mission and the Justice Party Deputation

The long awaited mission of Montagu came to Madras on 14th December 1917. As at Calcutta, once again Montagu and his mission had to face a weary, dreary round of deputations, interviews and dinner parties. Among the deputations which waited on them during their stay at Madras four represented the non-Brahmins. The Madras Presidency Association under the leadership of P. Kesava Pillai presented its memorandum on 17th December 1917. The very recognition of Madras Presidency Association by Montagu as representing non-Brahmins outraged the leaders of the Justice Party. Dr. T. M. Nair went to the extent of advising his party men to boycott the Montagu mission.⁷⁹ After much reconsideration, the leaders of the Justice Party decided to present its memorandum of grievances. The other three non-Brahmin deputations which consisted of 56 members in all were those of the S.I.L.F. headed by P. Rajaratna Mudaliar, the Madras Dravidian Association led by P. Ramarayaningar, and the non-Brahmin communities headed by R. Venkataratnam Naidu. Dr. T. M. Nair found a worthy place in the deputation of the S.I.L.F. They were all jointly introduced to the Secretary of State as well as the Viceroy.

The Memorandum of the S.I.L.F.

The memorandum of the S.I.L.F. which was couched almost in the same language as the Non-Brahmin Manifesto was read by Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chetti. It struck a discordant note against the proposals embodied in 'the Memorandum of the Nineteen.' It made it clear that if the scheme was given effect to, it would tend to weaken the British authority in India and thereby to jeopardise the interests of the large and hitherto inarticulate

masses of the country. It further made a lofty plea for the continuance of the British authority in India who alone in the present conditions and the circumstances would maintain justice among the various creeds and classes and develop in them a sense of unity and national solidarity without which India would continue to be a congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups without a common purpose and a common patriotism.⁸⁰

The memorandum stated that the memorialists "were, however, in favour of progressive political development, of a well-defined policy of trust in the people qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concession in the wake of proved fitness." At the same time they advocated, as a first measure of reform after the war, an extension of local self-government by the creation of municipalities and local boards with powers to manage their own affairs, liberated from the leading strings of government. They laid stress on the necessity of communal representation as an indispensable basis of such reforms.⁸¹ They wanted even the franchise to be established on a communal basis in order to secure proper representation of the different communities.

Memorandum of the Madras Dravidian Association

The deputation of the Madras Dravidian Association⁸² was headed by P. Ramarayaningar who read the address. It highlighted how education in Madras Presidency became the sole monopoly of the Brahmins, and how that proved to be a hindrance to the educational progress of the non-Brahmin communities who formed the bulk of the population. It pointed out further that the influence of the Brahmins grew by leaps and bounds. Even the Widows' Home in Madras which was originally started for widows of all classes had become the refuge of Brahmin women to the exclusion of non-Brahmins. Similarly when the trust property belonging to temples was diverted for educational purposes, the education imparted there was confined to Brahmins, though funds had been contributed chiefly, almost wholly, by non-Brahmins. Therefore, it made a humble request to the Secretary of State and the Viceroy to frame rules that the education

given from such diversion of funds should meet the needs of all classes of people and especially of the educationally backward classes. Besides, it argued that the scholarships should be used not merely as an incentive to individuals but as an inducement to communities.⁸³ It condemned the disdainful way in which the children of other communities were treated by the teachers of Brahmin community. It pointed out the inequity meted out to the students of Depressed classes who were barred from entering some schools and pleaded that this kind of social injustice should be put an end to and even the government grants to such schools should be stopped. The memorialists did not hesitate to reveal how civil laws were manipulated by the *Dharma Rakshana Sabha*, a Brahmin organisation, thereby transferring the management of temples and choultries built and endowed by non-Brahmins to Brahmin lawyers and their nominees and establishing a theocratic oligarchy. Hence they wanted the management of the charities to be vested in the members of the communities which had supplied the funds.⁸⁴ They were also of firm view that if Home Rule was introduced at present the suffering of educationally backward classes would be increased tenfold. They reiterated as the other memorialists had done that concentration of power in any particular class would be detrimental to the interests of the other classes.⁸⁵

Deputation of the Non-Brahmin Communities

On behalf of the non-Brahmin communities of the Madras Presidency both R. Venkataratnam Naidu and A. P. Patro read an address before the Montagu mission in which they stated that most of the power and influence had, in the present system of administration of the province became centred in the hands of a small community—a microscopic minority—who constituted a very little percentage of the population.⁸⁶ They argued with figures that in the last elections to the Legislative Council from the constituency comprising Local Boards, Municipalities and the Madras Corporation, Brahmins were able to secure nine seats out of ten, even though the majority of the voters were non-Brahmins. It was proved beyond doubt that there was no

guarantee for the success of the non-Brahmin candidates for the simple reason that *among the lawyers and the Indian officials, the Brahmins predominated and their influence was the decisive factor in the elections.*⁸⁷ Likewise it was pointed out that all the three seats in the Imperial Legislative Council open to Indians were at present held by Brahmins. In India, a government appointment, *besides providing administrative experience was a source of great power and influence and gave the holder of the appointment a status unheard of in other countries.*⁸⁸ They expressed their apprehension that if the present system should be continued, the power would increasingly concentrate in the hands of one community to the detriment and disadvantage of all other communities forming 97 per cent of the population. Therefore, *the memorialists earnestly appealed that in the scheme of reforms both in the councils of the country and in the public services, due and adequate representation should be given to the great non-Brahmin communities of the province.*

Montagu found a very strange and unhappy situation in Madras. "What particularly disturbed Montagu about the Brahmin-non-Brahmin difficulties in Madras was *that though the non-Brahmins were 'vigorous enough' in objecting to Brahmin influence they lay on their stomachs and cried out for government help instead of fighting.*"⁸⁹ Though the non-Brahmin leaders of Madras Presidency met Montagu in large numbers and submitted memoranda insisting on the necessity of granting communal representation to the non-Brahmins, they did not impress him much. The only non-Brahmin leader who made a very strong impression on Montagu was Dr. T. M. Nair. He made a forceful plea for communal representation *arguing that it was indispensable for at least sometime*⁹⁰ *till the preponderance of the Brahmins both in the field of politics and public services was removed.* He cited his own case as an example of how he was defeated in the elections due to effective canvassing by the Brahmin officials including a High Court Judge against him.⁹¹ It appeared to Montagu that all—Brahmins and non-Brahmins, English and Indian—had been set at loggerheads.⁹² Therefore, 'Montagu left Madras with a very heavy heart' on 23rd December 1917.⁹³

Theatre of War Shifted from Fort St. George to Westminster

Nair's Spade-work at London

The leaders of the Justice Party were convinced that the communal representation for the non-Brahmins in legislature and in public services would not be granted in the new reform proposals unless they carried their political campaign to England. As a close associate of Dadabhai Naoroji in his earlier days, Dr. T. M. Nair remembered his advice to his party men : "If the British bureaucracy in India refused to listen to you, approach the British democracy in England."⁹⁴ Accordingly he decided to take up the issue of communal representation to London and to place it before the democrats of that land. Though it was decided at the Justice Party conference held at Tanjore on 31st March 1918 to send a deputation under the leadership of Dr. T. M. Nair, owing to war conditions he alone obtained the passport to go to England.⁹⁵ Thus the burden of educating the British statesmen about the realities of the political situation in South India had fallen on his shoulders. The task which lay before him was two-fold. One was to urge the British authorities to include the principle of communal representation for the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency in the ensuing scheme of political reforms. The other one was to carry on a campaign against the Home Rulers.

Dr. T. M. Nair arrived in London in the middle of June 1918. Surprisingly no sooner did he land in England than he was asked to sign an undertaking to abstain from every form of political activity while in Europe and to return to India as soon as the medical treatment, which was the object of his visit, was completed.⁹⁶ It was suspected that the 'gagging order' was the work of Montagu. *Justice* took it as insult that Dr. T. M. Nair had been purposely humiliated by the British authorities in order to satisfy the Indian Extremists.⁹⁷ In the same way P. Theagaraya Chetti spoke at the extraordinary session of the Non-Brahmin Confederation held on 20th October 1918 as follows : "It is to please Mrs. Besant, Mr. Tilak and their followers that Dr. Nair was muzzled by Mr. Montagu in prompt response to their protests on his arrival in England." But silencing of Dr. Nair did not

serve any purpose. The publication of Montagu-Chelmsford Report immediately eased the situation, and it aroused a great deal of discussion in the press. Since the authors of the document invited genuine criticism the members of the House of Lords such as Lammington, Sydenham and Carmichael who were formerly the Governors of Indian Provinces raked up Dr. Nair's matter in a debate held on 31st July 1918 and urged the government to allow him to speak as he desired. Sydenham, a great admirer of Dr. T. M. Nair, boosted up his image by stating in the upper house of the British Parliament that he was the only Indian politician in England who could voice forth the grievances of the working classes of India whose views and aspirations we never heard.⁹⁸ The very next day the gagging order which was imposed on Dr. Nair was withdrawn. The fresh air of freedom that he inhaled in the alien soil gave him courage and enthusiasm. On 2nd August he addressed a group of members of both Houses of Parliament. He made a scathing criticism of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report for having recommended 'individual voting' for the legislative council as it could only pave the way for 'excessive over' representation of Brahmins.⁹⁹ He tried to persuade them to accept the principle of communal representation for the non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency which alone could be the panacea for their political ills. He explained to them that a constitutional reform without communal representation would be a failure in South India.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Nair pleaded for a franchise whereby only non-Brahmins would be enabled to exercise it for non-Brahmin candidates only in the elections for provincial legislative councils, as the Muslims were permitted under the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909.¹⁰¹

It is evident that Dr. T. M. Nair succeeded in convincing the British Parliamentarians that the communal representation should be incorporated as one of the cardinal principles of the Reforms. The letters of Shri Shahu Maharaj establish the fact that the former British administrators like Sydenham were very keen on having communal representation in the scheme of reforms. Lord Curzon and Lord Lansdown shared his views.¹⁰² The correspondence

of Shri Shahu Maharaj further reveals that Dr. Nair had planned on his way back to go over to places like Belgaum and Dharwar to canvass for communal representation as desired by his friends in England. Thus it was obvious that Dr. T. M. Nair's mission had not gone in vain and indeed he created a favourable political climate in England at least to some extent. In fact he did a splendid spade-work for the future deputation of the Justice Party to argue for communal representation before the Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament.

Publication of Montagu-Chelmsford Report and the Justice Party Reaction

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report¹⁰³ was published on 2nd July 1918. The authors of the Report pronounced against communal representation as they were of view that it was bad to evolve a constitution on such principles. The Justice Party presented a weighty memorandum on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report to the Government of Madras on 14th September 1918 signed by P. Theagaraya Chetti.¹⁰⁴ It explained at the outset the attitude of the non-Brahmins towards the above report. It said : "The non-Brahmins of South India have no reasons to rejoice over the Chelmsford-Montagu scheme of constitutional reform. They view it with grave concern. It has not come of their seeking. It has been thrust upon." Their grievance was that their representations including those of the Adi-Dravidas had been treated with scant respect, and the reform proposals were formulated "without giving a hearing to the prayer of the non-Brahmin classes." The memorandum even alleged that the reform scheme was drafted by consulting the Home Rulers rather confidentially and meant only to satisfy their aspirations and ambitions. The memorandum further added that there were only the Indian people divided into various classes, creeds and groups and popular representatives could individually represent at best sections, large or small, a few or many, of the teeming population. Therefore, it suggested that the only way to settle them was to recognise the differences. It went on further : "To ignore living communal

differences is to ignore burning facts and to perpetuate inequalities and social injustices which stand in the way of hearty co-operation and thus to become responsible for the perpetual backwardness of backward classes."¹⁰⁵ In this respect it quoted the instance of Muhammadans in whose case it had been abundantly proved that communal representation tended to improve inter-communal relations besides stimulating public spirit and educational progress. It made it clear that recognition of social and religious differences was "not for perpetuating them but for rectifying them by giving each community an opportunity of asserting its individuality and compelling respect."

By quoting from Sir Valentine Chirol's article published in *London Times*, the memorandum pointed out that class legislation was not unknown in more democratic countries than India and that to argue that there was no precedent for communal representation in the history of self-governing countries was contrary to truth. In addition, it maintained that even if there was no such precedent it should be remembered that there had been no caste in those self-governing countries. It was only the presence of caste in India "with its immutable distinctions and its offensive assertions of high and low as determined by divine ordinance" that necessitated the protection of weaker communities, small or large, whether constituting a majority or a minority by means of electoral hedges which would give them the required sense of proprietorship in the new opportunities created for them. The influence of Brahmins in South India as priests, as schoolmasters, as lawyers, as government servants, as journalists and in various other ways was enormous and well-nigh irresistible.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it was urged that the communal electorate was essential not only to safeguard the interests of the non-Brahmins but to prepare them for responsible government. The memorialists were convinced that without communal representation if the present proposal of reform was implemented, it would relax British control but tighten the grip of the Brahmins thereby "creating a British guaranteed and lawfully constituted Brahmin oligarchy, pledged to give practical effect to the Brahminical doctrines of *Varnashrama Dharma*."

With regard to direct election and the broadening of the franchise which the reform proposals suggested, the non-Brahmins felt tempted to approve them provided they (non-Brahmins) were granted separate electorate to exercise their franchise as had been done for the Muslims of India. Another aspect of the reforms which the memorialists hailed was the provincial decentralisation. At the same time they stressed the importance of financial freedom to place the provincial government on a popular basis. They argued that the provincial council constituted on the basis of communal electorate would spend the increased revenues impartially for the good of all classes. Otherwise, large revenue placed in the hands of a local government subject to oligarchic influence would be viewed with alarm and concern. The memorandum concluded as follows : " With communal representation secured through communal electorates the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms is capable of being worked to success ; without it, it is foredoomed to failure and disaster. "

The Justice Party had not remained satisfied with sending a memorandum to the Government of Madras on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report but organised an extraordinary session of the South Indian Non-Brahmin Confederation to discuss the question of Indian constitutional reform on 20th October 1918 at Madras. In his presidential address, P. Theagaraya Chetti vehemently protested against the stand taken by the authors of the report, on communal electorates, in an angry tone.

I cannot see how, inspite of the contentions of Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu, any system of communal electorates is a serious hindrance to the development of the self-government principle. If it was really so, why did they grant it to the Muhammadans and to the Sikhs ? Yes, they explain the reason. The Muhammadans regard it as a settled fact and in the words of the two statesmen, ' any attempt to go back on them would rouse a storm of bitter protest and put a sense of strain on the loyalty of a community which has behaved with conspicuous loyalty during a period of very great difficulty and which we know to be feeling no small

anxiety for its own welfare under a system of popular government.' What about the Sikhs? The Sikhs in the Punjab say Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu, 'are a distinct and important people; they supply a gallant and valuable element to the British army.' Presumably, the non-Brahmins of Madras will raise 'no storm of protest' and upon their loyalty no severe strain would be put by denying to them the right of separate representation. Are we to suppose that we, non-Brahmins have not like Muhammadans, "behaved with conspicuous loyalty during a period of great difficulty?" We know how we have behaved and what we are today, and it is our misfortune that we, non-Brahmins have failed to make any impression of our loyalty on Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. Again is it suggested that we, like the Sikhs, supply no "gallant and valuable element—to the British army". Are we really a community of emasculated parasites fit only to intrigue against and embarrass the government? Is this the reward for our loyalty and valour and industry as wealth producers?¹⁰⁷

Justice also commented on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report as follows :

The question of communal representation was most vigorously pressed on their attention during their stay (Montagu's mission) in this city The South Indian Liberal Federation and representatives of Audi-Dravidas gave them a splendid opportunity.... Their representations should have been considered not in the spirit of casual globetrotters picking up and noting down things in a Pickwickian fashion but as responsible statesmen entrusted with the difficult task of framing a constitution for India which would work without deadlocks, smoothly, successfully and to the advantage of all communities British Government or bureaucracy failed lamentably to do justice to the claims of the non-Brahmin communities ; and in spite of the non-Brahmin movement ... nothing has been done to correct the inequality and to remove the causes of the existing discontent If however, the present reform is carried

and without the adoption of the principle of communal representation, our position in the future will be infinitely worse than what it is today ; and then will arise a situation which it would certainly not be easy for British statesmen to deal with.¹⁰⁸

It is made known that the Justice Party had decided to fight relentlessly under the leadership of Dr. T. M. Nair to secure communal representation for the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency by mobilising support both in England and in India.

The Boycott of Southborough Committee

The authors of the Report on Indian constitutional reforms though outlined the general principles, left the details regarding the nature of the new franchise system and the exact division of the functions of government to be worked out and decided by two important government committees called, the Southborough and Feetham committees.¹⁰⁹ The Southborough committee which was known as the Franchise committee was very important for the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency. The composition of the committee became a controversial issue. It totally excluded non-Brahmins but included two Brahmins, one from Madras, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri (the political opponent of Dr. T. M. Nair) and the other from Bengal, Surendranath Bannerjee. They were congressmen who were considered by the leaders of the Justice Party, "the avowed opponents of the non-Brahmin movement and its aspirations."¹¹⁰ *Justice* described V. S. Srinivasa Sastri as 'pronounced Madras Brahmin' and "the advocate in the Imperial Legislative Council of Brahmin oligarchy."¹¹¹ The estimation of Montagu and Chelmsford about the Indian members that they were men of "high standing and repute" irritated *Justice* which pooh-poohed V. S. Srinivasa Sastri in contemptuous language :

Is he a man of high standing and repute ? It is the first time in the history of India that a mere agitator who has no income, who pays no tax, who, till the Madras Government nominated him four or five years ago to a seat on the local legislature was unknown and who, as a schoolmaster, could

not stand comparison not only with Indian educationaists on the staff of colleges, but with scores of high school headmasters and teachers of his own class. If Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford think that Mr. Srinivasa Sastry satisfies their idea of an Indian of high standing and repute, self-respecting Indians would ... be excused for being old fashioned enough to differ from them.¹¹²

The nomination of Sastri indeed injured the pride and self-respect of the most of the non-Brahmin leaders. It might be true as S. Saraswathi opined that "the objection was more to the individual chosen from Madras than to the caste to which he belonged."¹¹³

The Justice Party's reaction over the nomination of V. S. Srinivasa Sastri was rather prompt and immediate. It instructed the district and mofussil units of the S.I.L.F. to organise protest meetings, to pass resolutions expressing deep resentment over this matter and to send copies of them to the Government of Madras as well as the Government of India. One such meeting held at Tanjore is worth mentioning here. A. T. Pannirselvam, the President of the S.I.L.F. Tanjore, who played a significant role at the closing era of the Justice Party, organised a public meeting at Kanthappa Chettiar's choultry on 6th October 1918 and passed resolutions and sent copies of them to the Government of Madras. One of the resolutions ran as follows :

The non-Brahmins of Tanjore view with alarm and emphatically protest against the inclusion of the Hon'ble Mr. Srinivasa Sastry in the Franchise committee and strongly urge that Dr. Nair and Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chettiar be appointed to the Franchise and Finance committees respectively to safeguard the interests of non-Brahmin communities.¹¹⁴

It is also learnt that other non-Brahmin associations in the Presidency had made similar representations direct to the Government of India.¹¹⁵

The Justice Party, having geared up its machinery to make alarming protests against the nomination of V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, put up a good show by convening an extraordinary session of the South Indian Liberal Federation at Madras on 20th October 1918, and passed resolutions expressing its deep resentment over the present constitution of the Franchise Committee consisting of Brahmin Congressmen who were inimical to non-Brahmin aspirations and opposed to their demand for representation by a separate communal electorate.¹¹⁶

Further, the confederation viewed "with great indignation and dismay the indifference of the Government of India to the numerous influential protests" which came from various parts of the Presidency against the deliberate inclusion of V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and Surendranath Bannerjee in the Franchise committee. Taking into account "the partial and partisan character of the Franchise committee" and of "the studied silence of the government towards the influential and indignant protests of the non-Brahmins in this matter, the confederation finally urged the self-respecting non-Brahmins to boycott the Southborough committee until one or more non-Brahmin members representing the views of S.I.L.F. were appointed to each of the Reform committees.

The boycott move was viewed by a few Justicites as a bad political strategy. Nevertheless, Dr. T. M. Nair's stubborn stand on this issue ultimately prevailed over them. Even he was not unaware of the risks of antagonising the committee. However, the support that he expected from the Governor Pentland and his Executive Council perhaps took him to the extreme.¹¹⁷

Government of Fort St. George and Montagu-Chelmsford Report

In this connection it is apt here to state the views of the Government of Fort St. George on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.

The Governor and his Council were strongly impressed by the necessity of devising some means of providing for the representation of the communities which were "unable to secure any

adequate share in the elective portion of the Legislative Council.”¹¹⁸ The Government of Madras was of the view that the Brahmins monopolised such elective bodies only due to the ‘patent defect’ in the functioning of the present system. It quoted with figures, that in the present Legislative Council, the non-Brahmin Hindu castes, with a population of 26 millions had only one representative returned by territorial election while the Brahmins, numbering one and a half millions, had nine representatives. It expressed its hope that the Franchise committee would be “able to devise some means for ensuring the due representation of the great mass of the community.”¹¹⁹

Again when furnishing information on the subject of the franchise and the resulting electorates and constituencies for the provincial legislative councils under the Reform scheme, the Government of Madras observed :

In the case of the non-Brahman caste Hindus to which category the great majority of voters will belong, there is a general feeling of apprehension that under any scheme of purely territorial electorates most of the seats would be captured by Brahmins as the exclusive spirit of the Brahmins would secure a solid Brahman vote in favour of Brahman candidates. Their experience and their educational superiority would give the Brahmins great advantage in canvassing, while their traditional, social and religious pre-eminence and their talents for organisation would be utilized to extend their political influence outside their own class. While it is difficult to predict how the electorates of the future, if territorially constituted, will behave in respect of choosing their representatives the Governor in Council cannot ignore the fact that the apprehensions above referred to are honestly entertained.¹²⁰

In this connection, the Government of Madras quoted the returns of elections for the legislative council in 1909, 1912 and 1916 in order to emphasise that these apprehensions were genuine. In 1909, out of 13 seats allotted to local bodies and the landed

interests, only three went to Brahmins, and nine to the non-Brahmin caste Hindus and the remaining one to a Muhammadan. Similarly in 1912 elections, out of 15, seven went to Brahmins and eight to non-Brahmin caste Hindus. But in 1916 the Brahmins secured ten seats but the non-Brahmins won only five seats inspite of their numerical majority.¹²¹ Under the circumstances stated, the Government of Madras felt that it would be impracticable to constitute territorial electorates which would ensure representation of all important sections of the population. The same view was pressed by the Governor at a conference with the members of the Franchise committee. During the course of the discussion he made it clear that in the opinion of the local government the non-Brahmins would not be satisfied with anything less than communal electorates.

The Findings of the Southborough Committee

The Southborough Committee found a disturbed political situation in Madras. The Justice Party had already taken an irrevocable stand to boycott it. The Government of Fort St. George also did not hesitate to demonstrate its intention that it was very much opposed to the proposal of broadening the franchise and of creating the territorial electorates.¹²² Even before their arrival, the members of the committee had received a considerable body of representations relating to the question of communal representation and had acquainted themselves with the discussions on the subject in the press. In fact, it appears that they wanted to enter into a full and careful consideration of this question but they were "deprived of the opportunity of hearing those leaders of the non-Brahmins". They earnestly desired to use their good offices to find some method of composing these important differences which disturbed the political life of the presidency. They declared that the refusal of the non-Brahmin leaders to appear at their inquiry prevented them from using their power of intervention and made a settlement by consent impossible.¹²³

The following alternatives emerged from the consideration of the Southborough Committee :

- (a) to constitute a non-Brahmin communal electorate comprising all classes of Hindus other than Brahmins ;
- (b) to constitute large multiple constituencies and to reserve a certain proportion of seats for non-Brahmin candidates ; and
- (c) to limit the number of Brahmin candidates to be returned by such constituencies.

The report of the Southborough committee is given hereunder :

We for our part feel unable to recommend the constitution of a separate communal electorate for non-Brahmins. Whatever value and propriety such a measure may have for protecting a minority against the pressure of other communities of interests, it would be unreasonable to adopt this expedient for protecting a community which has an overwhelming electoral strength.¹²⁴

While rejecting the demand of the non-Brahmins for communal electorate, it maintained that the non-Brahmin population outnumbered the Brahmins in the proportion of about 22 to 1 and as per the electoral qualifications recommended in the Report the non-Brahmins would exceed the Brahmin electors in proportion of at least 4 to 1. It was of the view that the non-Brahmins could establish their preponderance of votes and secure election of their own candidates if they were able to utilize their capacity already devoted to politics. The proposal for the reservation of a considerable number of seats for non-Brahmins in plural member constituencies where either Brahmins or non-Brahmins could vote was acceptable to the Southborough committee. It suggested that any modification on these lines might be introduced into the electoral system for this Presidency so that the controversy might be laid finally to rest.¹²⁵

The Government of India and Southborough Committee

The Government of India expressed its inability to agree with the findings of the Southborough committee with regard to the

claims of the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency for communal representation. If, contrary to theoretical principles, communal electorates were to be conceded to three communities (Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Christians) in addition to the Muhammadans and the Sikhs, it appeared to the Government of India that there was a very strong practical need for finding some means of dealing specially with the non-Brahmins also. It explicitly stated that it was not possible for them to expect co-operation and the goodwill from the non-Brahmins so long as no provision was made to secure their interests. The Government of India felt that it was its responsibility to make every attempt to arrive at a settlement which would satisfy the reasonable claims of both parties before reforms were introduced.¹²⁶

We are less optimistic. Recent experience in Madras has shown how inadequately non-Brahmins are likely to be represented in the council, unless some special provision for them is made. Numbers count for little in India at present against social, educational and especially religious superiority which has behind it the sanction of centuries. We shall find it hard to meet the charge that we are acquiescing in the establishment of an oligarchy in Madras, unless something is done to secure to the non-Brahmins a fair share in the legislature.¹²⁷

The Government of India therefore strongly recommended that the constituencies might be arranged in such a way that thirty out of the sixty-one non-Muhammadan seats could be reserved for non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council allowing the remaining seats to be contested by both parties without restriction. Nevertheless, the suggestion of the Government of India was viewed by Madras Government as impracticable. It was in favour of communal electorates for non-Brahmins. As an alternative it preferred the limiting of the number of Brahmin seats in plural general Hindu constituencies to the reservation of seats in plural constituencies for non-Brahmins.

The Justice Party Deputation and the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee

The scene of battle for communal representation was shifted from Fort St. George to Westminster, when Montagu-Chelmsford report was placed before the Joint Select Committee for its final decision. The puzzling process of legislation afforded the Justice Party the necessary time and opportunity to organise its campaign effectively both in India and in England. It gathered support not only from the Government of Fort St. George and from Government of India but also from 'certain reactionary groups in England.' Having boycotted the Southborough committee, the Justice Party decided to present its case before the Joint Parliamentary Select committee, since it believed in the British sense of justice and fairplay.¹⁸⁸ All the political parties in India including the Muslim League sent their representatives to plead and to present their case before the committee. The major burden of championing the cause of the non-Brahmins solely fell on the Justice Party.

The Justice Party deputation, apart from its top leader, Dr. T. M. Nair, included the chief satraps of the party, K. V. Reddi Naidu from Ellore, Arcot Ramaswami Mudaliar from Madras, Koka Appa Rao from Behrampore and L. K. Tulsiram from Madura. P. Ramarayaningar (later the Rajah of Panagal), one of the trio of the Justice Party sailed to London though not as a member of the Justice Party deputation but as the representative of the All India Land-holders Association and Madras Zamindars and Land-holders Association. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and K. V. Reddi Naidu left Bombay on 21st June 1919 for London in a steamer.¹⁸⁹ The other delegates, Tulsiram and Koka Appa Rao, followed them a month later. The declining health of Dr. Nair compelled him to go to London a few months earlier than his colleagues. No sooner than Ramaswami Mudaliar and K. V. Reddi Naidu arrived in London, they heard the sad news that their captain and guide, Dr. Nair was seriously ill and that he had been admitted in a nursing home in London.¹⁹⁰ Next day, when they met him they did not know that his end would be so soon. In spite of it, he had a long talk with his lieutenants about

the ways and means to be adopted for the successful completion of their mission and "about the lines on which they should prepare their evidence for submission to the committee."¹⁸¹ The members of the deputation were very quick and prompt in acting on the advice of their leader. Immediate rapport was established between them and Charles Watney, an enthusiastic journalist. The Justice delegates met him almost everyday and had consultations on every new development.¹⁸² It is learnt from the diary of Ramaswami Mudaliar that Dr. Nair desired to chalk out their plan of campaign as soon as the other members of the deputation arrived.¹⁸³ But Dr. Nair's health rapidly declined. So the Joint Parliamentary Select committee decided to take his evidence on 18th July in the nursing home itself. Before the great founder-leader of the Non-Brahmin movement could give his evidence before the Selbourne Committee he died on 17th July 1919.¹⁸⁴ With his death a glorious era in the history of Dravidian movement came to an abrupt end. In his demise the country had lost "an eminent surgeon, a great politician, a finished speaker, a facile writer and a leader and champion of the oppressed."¹⁸⁵

The Work Ahead of Justice Deputation

Notwithstanding the great calamity the members of the Justice Party exerted themselves in a remarkable way. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar met C. Watney to work out the further plan of action. The help that Watney rendered to the Justice deputation was invaluable. His wide contact with the public and his acquaintance with the members of the Parliament facilitated the work of the deputation. But for his help the Justice leaders would have confronted much hardship and difficulties. It is doubtful whether they would have achieved their object without his influence. To quote Irschick, "Watney was an extremely clever strategist, and he not only directed the deputation's efforts to the influencing of public opinion through the press but he also contrived to manipulate the procedure of the Joint Select Committee in their favour."¹⁸⁶

The letters of K. V. Reddi Naidu and Ramaswami Mudaliar published in *Justice*, in *Madras Mail*, and in other local papers

speak of the way they gained sympathy for their cause. Apart from meeting members of the Houses of Lords and Commons and placing their case before them, they wrote articles in various local papers like *Morning Post*, *Staffordshire Sentinel*, and *The Times* explaining the problems of the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency. The representatives of the Justice Party were anxious to get the support of both the politicians and the British public for their view point before the Congress could commence its campaign.¹³⁷ Therefore they got into communication with various Labour and Liberal Associations in London, seeking opportunities for addressing them. Some associations such as the Lambeth Liberal and Radical Club and the Bermondsey Independent Labour Party gave them the platform.¹³⁸ The Justice Party leaders campaigned in almost all the major cities of the provinces in England. Ramaswami Mudaliar and K. V. Reddi Naidu delivered more than thirty speeches both in mofussil and in the metropolitan cities of England including London.¹³⁹ Similarly campaign was also organised by S. Satyamurthy, the Secretary to the Congress deputation. But due to paucity of funds the Congress could not venture to send its members to address in provincial cities as the Justice Party did.¹⁴⁰ On 20th October 1919 both the Justice leaders and the Congress representatives organised meetings in Bristol. It was reported in the local newspapers that the non-Brahmin meeting attracted larger audience.¹⁴¹ It is clear from this that the cause of the non-Brahmins was winning sympathy from the public of England.

An Appeal to the Members of the Labour Party of the House of Commons

In spite of the fact that the leaders of the Justice Party gathered a considerable support from the public of England, they had a genuine apprehension that Montagu would sabotage the interests of the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency. As a result, K. V. Reddi Naidu and A. Ramaswami Mudaliar decided to convince the Labour members of the House of Commons—the active political group in the Westminster Hall—of the necessity of making a common cause with the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency

as far as the issue of communal representation was concerned. Hence the following appeal :

The highest caste in the country, the Brahmin, is not and never has been a labourer. His great law giver Manu enjoins him not to soil himself by manual labour. He looks upon the labourer with contempt, priding himself on his superior intellectual attainments. Socially, the non-Brahmin to some extent, and the *Panchamas* to an inconceivable degree is subjected to degradations at his hands which it would be impossible for a Britisher to understand. It is amusing to see the Brahmin parading himself as a Democrat and pleading for the labourer.

The Justice Party delegates disclosed the aims and objectives of the Non-Brahmin movement to the British public by stating that the party was started to make the labourers of the land and the masses of the people, happier and to give them their fair share in the governance of the country.

Our movement is not solely a movement for getting political power transferred to our hands, but it is a huge revolt against the pernicious social system which is at present in existence.

For that reason, they exhorted the Labour M.P.s to help the real ~~non~~-Brahmin labourers to get into power. Moreover they explained that Mrs. Besant and her Theosophical society operated as the greatest force of hindrance to the social progress of the non-Brahmin communities.

The leaders claimed that they also belonged to the labouring class and owing to their education which they had accidentally, they had come to occupy other walks of life and their nearest kith and kin were actual "agricultural labourers, tilling the soil and earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brow." They concluded their appeal by stating that "the Indian labourer is anxious for reforms, but he wants reforms which will give him some benefit, and not reforms which will place a priestly caste in

power—a caste which treats him with contempt.”¹⁴² The appeal of the Justice Party leaders had not fallen on the deaf ears of the Labour Party M.P.s. Persons such as T. Wilson and Neil Maclean, helped them to have a talk with the Labour Party Executive in the House of Commons and also to address several gatherings of Labour Party members.¹⁴³ It is true that the delegates had not left any stone unturned. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar who was active right from the beginning, met even the members of the Scottish Party like Colonel A. Murray to mobilise their support for the cause of the non-Brahmins. The work of the deputation opened the eyes of even Montagu.

The Memorandum of K. V. Reddi Naidu

The burden of leading the deputation of the Justice Party fell on the shoulders of K. V. Reddi Naidu after the death of Dr. Nair. In fact, he became the virtual leader of the deputation. He was ably assisted by A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and Kavalpara Moopil Nair who was in London at that time, in getting a memorandum drafted on the lines indicated by their departed leader, Dr. T. M. Nair. A. R. Mudaliar took pains in correcting the proof of K. V. Reddi Naidu's memorandum. It was the largest of the memoranda submitted by the Indian deputations.¹⁴⁴ It was a massive and comprehensive memorandum on communal representation for the non-Brahmins of Madras running to thirty closely printed foolscap pages.¹⁴⁵ Besides the document which was divided into forty-four paragraphs, contained all the facts and arguments carefully and skillfully marshalled.

K. V. Reddi Naidu, at the beginning of the memorandum, pointed out how the Province of Madras differed from the rest of India. He showed how the rigour of caste still remained undiminished there and how exclusively sectarian the Brahmins of the province were. He declared : “The cleavage between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins is the widest (in Madras). They belong to different castes which make it impossible for them to interdine or intermarry—an impossibility which has all the sanction of the law of the land. Their customs and manners are essentially

different, and even in the matter of food, the two classes differ widely. Their interests are often not identical."¹⁴⁵ K. V. Reddi Naidu deposed that there was ethnic difference between these two castes :

*The Brahmins claim to be Aryans, while the non-Brahmins claim to be and are traced as Dravidians. There is only one thing in common between these two widely different and vitally hostile races—their religion, if that sacred appellation could be given to a set of inflexible and unjust custom and usages culminating in a system of social tyranny.*¹⁴⁷

The memorandum further continued to point out how the Brahmins preponderated in the councils of the country and in the public services. K. V. Reddi Naidu then invited the attention of the Joint Select committee to the fact that all non-Brahmin associations, including the Madras Presidency Association had asked for communal representation.

The memorandum then rebutted all arguments put forth against communal representation in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. While focussing the attention of the Joint Select committee on the question of reservation of seats for non-Brahmins in plural constituencies, the document stated :

*The object of the Brahmin leaders in consenting to the reservation of seats for non-Brahmins in plural constituencies in which they (Brahmins) themselves will also be voters, is to see that the real leaders of the non-Brahmins are not returned to the councils but that the nominees of the Brahmins like the members of the Madras Presidency Association are returned.*¹⁴⁸

At the close, the memorandum sounded a note of warning. If communal representation was not granted to non-Brahmins, the majority of the seats would be captured by Brahmins and the rest by their nominees. Likewise the public services would be monopolised by the same. As a result, the Brahmins would rise in power and it would be 'utilized for the aggrandisement of the Brahmins.'

Ultimately a Brahmin oligarchy would be substituted for a British bureaucracy.¹⁴⁹

K. V. Reddi Naidu ended his memorandum by quoting the views of the zamindar of Telaprole, a prominent leader of the Justice Party. "We are not cattle to be sold by one master to another, with the further humiliation of the first master standing by with a bludgeon in case we object to be sold."¹⁵⁰ Further he unhesitatingly remarked that the domination of the majority by a minority would sow the seeds of revolution and lead to civil war. "If there should be any such contingency and blood has to be shed, at whatever distant date it may be such blood will be on the heads of those who oppose this resolution of communal representation at this critical period of our history."¹⁵¹ Reddi concluded his memorandum with a fervent appeal to the British authorities: "A great reform scheme with such far-reaching consequences cannot be ushered in when vast communities are groaning under discontent at the very threshold of its inauguration. Peace, contentment and justice have been Britain's greatest boons to India. God grant it, they may not be taken away from us now."¹⁵²

The Oral Evidence of K. V. Reddi Naidu

The evidence of K. V. Reddi Naidu before the Joint Select committee on 12th August 1919 was a clear instance of the test of his endurance. The cross examination lasted for three and a half hours.¹⁵³ Almost all members of the committee questioned him and he was able to withstand their onslaught as the able lieutenant of Dr. Nair and also as a seasoned lawyer. Irschick adduces reasons for such intensity with which Reddi Naidu was examined by the Joint committee. "It can be accounted for partly by the recent death of Dr. Nair, for whom Naidu had to speak, but more especially by the great agitation that had been carried on both in England and in India by the Justice Party and its supporters. The committee very clearly seems to have realised that it must have a full inquiry."¹⁵⁴ K. V. Reddi Naidu who represented the South Indian Liberal Federation, prefaced

his evidence with the observation that he represented 28 millions of people out of 40 millions in South India. In course of his evidence Reddi Naidu pointed out to the committee that the "conditions in Madras were special and different from those elsewhere in India." Inequality based on the accident of birth was very glaring in this part of the country and a common race and single nationality appeared to be an impossibility. He expressed his hope before the committee that equality could be created by a system of communal representation and by the gradual evolution of responsible government and it would, in turn, render inter-marriage possible and feasible, and with it, in fullness of time, a common race and perhaps a nationality.¹⁵⁵ He proceeded further and said :

If communal representation was not granted a Brahmin oligarchy would be substituted for the British bureaucracy, that responsible government would fail, that stagnation, neglect, political depression, excessive inequality and the domination of majorities by a minority would be the only result, leading in its turn to oppression and tyranny.¹⁵⁶

The spokesman of the Justice Party most eloquently emphasised before the committee that they were not prepared to accept any reform without communal representation. He explained that they did not want the Government of India's proposed reservation of certain seats. The leader of the non-Brahmin delegation desired separate electorate, in which the Brahmins should have no part. It was his contention that general electorate proposed by the government did not facilitate the election of persons who were truly representatives of the non-Brahmins.¹⁵⁷ The witness, while answering a spate of questions, stated categorically that non-Brahmins were not anti-Brahmins, and maintained that "if communal representation were given to the non-Brahmins, they would co-operate loyally in working any scheme of government."¹⁵⁸ When Sydenham asked Reddi whether non-Brahmins threatened the committee of Parliament, the answer was "No. A non-Brahmin cannot afford to threaten."¹⁵⁹ He did not agree with the contention of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report that with the

passage of time, when education became more diffused and political responsibility spread, the difficulties of the non-Brahmins would disappear. When one of the members of the committee made a dig at him by quoting his evidence that the Brahmins as a class were clever and well-educated while the non-Brahmins were almost entirely illiterate and whether he wanted the legislative council to be composed of illiterate people, he answered, "What was wanted in the legislative councils was not the intellect of the country, but the interests of the country."¹⁶⁰ Furthermore Reddi Naidu took special care to draw the attention of the committee to the condition of the *Panchamas* and the working classes generally in this country who were all non-Brahmin Hindus whom Manu and his upholders had kept down for ages and between whom and the Brahmins there could be nothing in common entitling the latter to speak on behalf of the former.¹⁶¹ To a further question by Montagu, he replied that "the Brahmin interest in the social improvement of the Depressed classes was not genuine." On the same day in the evening the committee heard the evidence of P. Ramarayaningar.

The performance of Naidu was remarkable. The content and spirit behind the Justice Party's proposals were very much appreciated by the Joint Select committee. "There is little doubt that Reddi Naidu's evidence was received with sympathy and interest, even by those, including Ormsby Gore, who opposed special treatment for the Madras non-Brahmins."¹⁶² A detailed report of Naidu's evidence was published in the columns of *The Times* and *Standard*.

The Joint Committee's Refusal to Examine the Other Members of the Justice Deputation

It is mysterious even now to think as to why the Joint Select committee refused to examine the other non-Brahmin delegates, especially A. Ramaswami Mudaliar who went along with K. V. Reddi Naidu. Under the pretext of lack of time the committee pleaded its inability to examine the other non-Brahmin representatives but it expressed its willingness to receive their memoranda.¹⁶³

At once Watney took up cudgels for the non-Brahmin delegation and wrote a strongly worded complaint to the committee, alleging that it was partial towards the non-Brahmin deputation. He pointed out that it had heard four South Indian Brahmins who represented a microscopic minority of the population of Madras Presidency whereas it expressed its unwillingness to hear the same number of witnesses from South Indian non-Brahmins who journeyed to England at a great cost and strain. Watney, being the editor of *World* gave a copy of the protest letter to all the press which, in turn, published it widely. A. R. Mudaliar himself drafted a reply and sent it on to the committee which convinced the members of the committee of the necessity of hearing the other non-Brahmin delegates. The Secretary of the committee decided to hear the witnesses of A. R. Mudaliar, L. K. Tulsiram and Koka Appa Rao Naidu on Monday the 25th August 1919 at 2-00 p.m.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps the English sense of justice and fairplay prevailed over the members of the committee and made them reverse their earlier decision.

In the meantime the leaders of the Justice Party in Madras reacted vehemently against the refusal of the Joint committee to hear the witnesses of the other non-Brahmin delegates. *Justice* in its editorial on 1st September 1919 gave a clarion call to the non-Brahmins.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and this is the time for non-Brahmins to place their settled convictions ... before the committee. We appeal to our friends all over the province to hold meetings immediately and send their protests directly to Lord Selborne, the chairman of the committee and to some other members of it such as the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Middleton, Lord Grewe, Lord Sydenham, Lord Islington, Captain Ormsby Gore, even to Mr. Montagu and to the Prime Minister, to Lord Curzon as the leader of the House of Lords, to Mr. Bonar Law, the leader of the House of Commons and to the Editors of such powerful London newspapers as *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, *The Daily Telegraph* and to the *Spectator*. It is clear that the situation is critical and prompt action on our part is necessary.¹⁶⁵

P. Theagaraya Chetti and Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar sent cables of protests to various conservative newspapers in England on behalf of the Justice Party and the Madras Dravidian Association respectively. They were published in *Spectator* on 30th August 1919. The cables expressed the resentment of the South Indian non-Brahmins over the refusal of the Joint committee to hear further evidence of the Justice Party. Before these protests reached England, the Joint committee had heard the remaining witnesses of the non-Brahmin deputation.

The Memorandum and the Evidence of A. Ramaswami Mudaliar

The memorandum of A. R. Mudaliar was not only lucid but also precise in its contents. He gave evidence before the Joint committee as the representative of the Madras Dravidian Association.¹⁶⁶ He stated in his memorandum :

We ask for communal representation only as a temporary expedient. It is said that the reforms themselves are only for a transitional period. We do not ask for communal electorates for all eternity. We only ask for it for a transitional period, so that, for instance when the next parliamentary committee meets and goes over the whole question, it will be quite within its powers to say that communal representation is no longer necessary.¹⁶⁷

The oral evidence of Mudaliar, though lasted only for half an hour, left indelible impression in the mind of Montagu who said to the former when he met him on 28th August 1919. "The eloquence of yourself and your friends has convinced the committee that something must be done for you." The campaign of the Justice leaders even after deposing their witnesses before the Joint committee was relentless. They utilized the English press to the maximum.¹⁶⁸ They were extremely active in putting their case before the public and the press of England during the months of August, September and October 1919 when the Joint committee was in session examining the witnesses. The unceasing endeavour indeed made not only the non-Brahmin ideology familiar with the English public but also popularised the concept that "the Brahmin could not be trusted with the welfare of the Indian Empire."¹⁶⁹

It must be noted here that but for the help and guidance of Watney, the Justice Party deputation would not have succeeded in presenting their case before the public and the press of England as effectively as they had done.

The Report of the Selbourne Committee

The committee published its report on 17th November 1919. The following was the decision of the committee :

In the Madras Presidency the committee consider that the non-Brahmins must be provided with separate representation by means of reservation of seats. The Brahmins and non-Brahmins should be invited to settle the matter, by negotiation among themselves ; and it would only be, if agreement cannot be reached in that way, that the decision should be referred to an arbitrator appointed for the purpose by the Government of India.¹⁷⁰

The reaction of the Justice Party towards the recommendation of the Joint committee was hostile. *Justice* wrote :

It was unwise at this final stage of the reform legislation, for Parliament to abdicate its functions in regard to the question of communal representation for non-Brahmins by referring it back to the authorities in India who have so far shown no practical sympathy with the demands and aspirations of the non-Brahmins.¹⁷¹

Truly speaking the non-Brahmins lost their case in both ways. (a) They were not granted separate electorate as they demanded ; (b) instead the Joint committee allotted the reservation of seats in the plural constituencies not to the Brahmins, the minority community but to the non-Brahmins, the majority community. It was contrary to the expectations of the leaders of the Justice Party since they insisted on communal electorates and as an alternative they wanted reservation of seats in the plural constituencies to the Brahmins. It is pathetic that neither of the demands of the Justice Party was conceded by the Joint committee. Even the recommendation of the local government

was ignored. Irschick has remarked that the fact that the results of the elections to the Madras Legislative Council, held in July 1919, were in favour of non-Brahmins,¹⁷³ reversing what had happened in 1916, weighed against the demand of the Justice Party.

The Efforts of Willingdon to Settle the Question of Separate Representation to Non-Brahmins

Willingdon, an ardent Liberal, though 'he personally was against all reservation' convened a conference between a group of non-Brahmins including the representatives of Madras Presidency Association and Brahmins on 13th January 1920 to decide the question of reservation of seats to non-Brahmins in accordance with the decision of the Joint Select committee. The conference ended in fiasco as the representatives of both groups remained obstinate with regard to their stand. *Dravidan*, the Tamil journal of the Justice Party, attributed the failure to the disagreement of the Brahmin leaders "to allow as many seats to the non-Brahmins as the latter should have in proportion to their population" and it further condemned the Government of Madras as 'a complete Brahman Government' and its Governor Lord Willingdon as 'a Brahman Lord'. It therefore appealed to the non-Brahmins to agitate for their rights before the next conference which was scheduled to be held on the 31st January 1920.¹⁷³

The next conference of the same groups of representatives was summoned by the Governor as per the programme on the above date. Fifteen representatives of three groups, namely Brahmins, Madras Presidency Association and Justice Party met under the presidentship of Lord Willingdon.¹⁷⁴ The governor made it clear in the beginning that the issue before the conference was to decide the number of seats to be reserved for the non-Brahmins in the general constituencies.

The Brahmin group found an eloquent spokesman in C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar who effectively championed their cause. He began to interpret the plea of special protection to non-Brahmins in terms of reserving minimum number of seats and pressed the

same to be recognised as the principle for arriving at an agreement at the 'beginning of the conference. Ramachandra Rao, "a highly intelligent and articulate Andhra Brahman and an arch-enemy of K. V. Reddi Naidu" repeated the same argument.¹⁷⁵ He reiterated that "the matter should not be approached from the point of view of population but from the point of view of the protection of 'helpless community'. In this connection he recalled that this point had been emphasized before the Joint committee in England. He placed a proposal before the conference which almost materialised later. Accordingly two seats at least should be allotted to each district of which one in each district should be reserved for non-Brahmins.

Theagaraya Chetti, the leader of the S.I.L.F., put forth his argument on the basis of the electoral strength of the Brahmins. He asserted that the proportion of Brahmins to non-Brahmins on the electoral register would be about 1 to 8 and therefore the Brahmins should have atmost 7 seats out of 63. K. V. Reddi Naidu, an able advocate of non-Brahmin cause, was of the view that the object of separate representation was to prevent the Brahmins from getting substantially more seats than their numbers would justify. He was emphatic that the Brahmins should have only 4 seats as they constituted 3 per cent of the whole population of the presidency. Population-wise the Brahmins were almost equal to Indian Christians who were to be given only 5 or 6 seats. Similarly the Muhammadans who numbered more than double the Brahmins were to have 13 seats. From all these points of view, Reddi Naidu contended, the Brahmins were *legitimately* entitled to not more than 7 seats. As the chairman of the conference, Willingdon remarked that if the question of reservation was dispassionately and impartially considered it would be reasonable on the part of the non-Brahmins to agree to the reservation of 50 per cent of the seats. Thus the Governor considered 50 per cent 'a fair compromise'. The non-Brahmin representatives, more particularly Theagaraya Chetti, remained unyielding and conclusively said that he and his party could not agree to 50 per cent.¹⁷⁶ The sustained efforts of the Governor to bring forth a compromise

between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins proved futile again and therefore the question of reservation of seats, as per the direction of the Joint committee was left to be settled by an arbitrator.

Lord Meston's Award

Lord Meston of Agra was appointed by the Government of India at the instance of Lord Willingdon as the arbitrator.¹⁷⁷ It was announced that he was expected to arrive in Madras on the 28th February 1920. The government invited the two communities, each to choose six representatives to appear before the arbitrator and to put forth their case. The communique of the government further stated that the names of the representatives selected should be finally settled and forwarded to the Special Secretary to government (Reforms) before 21st instant.

In the meantime, the two rival communities, the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, started their political campaigns to mobilise their strength and to popularise their view points with regard to 'separate representation' for the non-Brahmins. The Justice Party adopted its usual tactics, and sent circulars to its district branches to pass resolutions urging the arbitrator to reserve the maximum number of the total Hindu seats to the non-Brahmins. Accordingly the Tanjore branch of the S.I.L.F. adopted a resolution on 23rd February 1920 under the chairmanship of T. V. Umamaheswaram Pillai, President, Taluk Board, Tanjore, pressing for the reservation of 66 per cent of the Hindu seats to the non-Brahmins and the above resolution sounded a note of warning that anything short of that would cause grave discontent.¹⁷⁸ Likewise, the Kannamangalam branch of the S.I.L.F. passed a resolution to the effect. In this regard, an open letter written by the non-Brahmins of Satur, belonging to Madras Presidency Association, Dravida Sangam and other non-Brahmin communities deserves to be mentioned here. The letter emphasised that the question of reservation of seats in the general constituencies for non-Brahmins should be decided by reference to their population. It went on further : "Any other mode of settling the question will be, not only injudicious, but unreasonable, unfair

and improper. Judging by this canon, the Brahmins are entitled only to 3 seats out of 63 in the council."¹⁷⁹

The Brahmins were equally vehement in making their own view points widely known not only to the authorities but also to the people. They too organised meetings and passed resolutions urging that not more than 50 per cent of the seats should be reserved for the non-Brahmins. One P. M. Rajagopalachari, government pensioner and Honorary correspondent, Publicity Bureau, penned a letter in which he stated :

The Joint committee recommended for the reservation of seats for the non-Brahmins only as a safeguard against the usurpation of all seats by Brahmins. But if half the number of seats is reserved for non-Brahmins and the rest thrown open for both the Brahmins and non-Brahmins to compete, the Brahmin element will be eliminated from the council, which is not certainly the intention of the Joint Parliamentary committee.¹⁸⁰

Sir Alexander Cardew, a stout champion of the non-Brahmin objectives had already left Madras.¹⁸¹ It was the misfortune of the non-Brahmins that Gillman, another defender of their cause was no longer living in this world. The appointment of P. Rajagopalachariar, a Brahmin, as the Indian member of the Executive Council was not so congenial to the aspirations of the non-Brahmins as before. Obviously, these changes encouraged the Brahmin leaders to be stubborn in their stand. It was clear from the circumstances prevailing at the Fort St. George that the non-Brahmin leaders, having failed to achieve much in England, were fighting a losing battle.

To facilitate Lord Meston to start his parley with the leaders of Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities on 1st March 1920, F. B. Evans, Special Officer (Reforms), Fort St. George, Madras, corresponded with S.I.L.F. and Madras Presidency Association to get the names of their six representatives.

The S.I.L.F. suggested the following four names to appear before Meston :

1. P. Theagaraya Chetti.
2. K. V. Reddi Naidu
3. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and
4. L. K. Tulsiram

Similarly the Madras Presidency Association sent four names : (1) P. Kēsava Pillai, (2) Lodd Govind Dass, (3) Chakkarai Chetti, and (4) T. Adinarayana Chetti. The Government chose first three names from both the S.I.L.F. and the Madras Presidency Association lists. This suggestion was agreed upon by both non-Brahmin groups. In the place of K. V. Reddi Naidu (who was nominated as an additional member of the Imperial Legislative Council), L. K. Tulsiram was substituted. Likewise, the leading Brahmins of Madras city and mofussil not only gave the names of six representatives to appear before Lord Meston, but also sent a statement signed by 600 persons of the Brahmin community belonging to various professions. The following were the names of persons :

- (1) T. R. Ramachandra Aiyar, (2) S. Srinivasa Iyengar, (3) P. Narayanamurthi, (4) M. Ramachandra Rao, (5) B. V. Narasimha Iyer, and (6) C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar.

Since S. Srinivasa Iyengar refused to appear before the arbitrator, K. Rama Iyengar was substituted in his place. The twelve persons mentioned above were invited to appear before Lord Meston on 1st March 1920 at the council chamber. At the start, Meston made an appeal to the representatives of both groups for an amicable settlement among themselves but it was found that they could not compose their differences.¹⁸³ The non-Brahmin leaders of both the S.I.L.F. and the Madras Presidency Association were unanimous in demanding 42 seats for them if 66 seats were allotted to the general Hindu electorate. They asserted that this was the "correct summary of the wish of their community."¹⁸³

The Brahmin leaders declared that 33 per cent in the territorial seats would be a reasonable reservation (Question Nos. 9532

and 9752) to protect the interests of the non-Brahmins.¹⁸⁴ The Brahmin leaders did not fail to bring to the notice of the arbitrator that the non-Brahmins were able to establish their sway in the recent elections to the Legislative Council and the Municipal Corporation, Madras. Only five Brahmins were elected to the Legislative Council and only seven Brahmins were returned to the Council of the Corporation which had a strength of 30. Therefore they argued that there was no need for electoral protection to the non-Brahmins. They asserted : " We are therefore prepared to accede to any arrangement which will afford a reasonable protection without altering the general character of the territorial constituencies or the method of election to be adopted."¹⁸⁵ In their opinion the reasonable protection was to reserve one seat in each district for the non-Brahmins and two in the city of Madras. They were courageous enough to state that their community being the minority had ' no reasonable chance of success ' at the elections without some protection to them.

Lord Meston gave his consideration to the case as thus presented by both groups. He had a thorough grasp of the matter as he had the advantage of hearing most of the witnesses before the Joint Select committee in the previous year. He was convinced that the views of the Brahmins were in consonance with the general principles of equity. Moreover, the statistics that he obtained from the secretariat of the Fort St. George made him believe that the non-Brahmins were already competent to secure reasonable success in the elections to the local bodies such as Municipal Councils and District Boards. The figures showed that in these bodies non-Brahmins had captured a very considerable proportion of seats. As a result he arrived at a decision that there was no necessity to provide further more than ' a reasonable minimum number of non-Brahmin seats. ' He gave reasons for his conclusions thus :

The claim of the non-Brahmins for special protection is based, as I understand it, on the apprehension that they would otherwise be left in a minority at the polls, despite their superior voting power, by reason of the social influence and electioneering tactics of the Brahmins. To avert such a

contingency it does not appear to me necessary to guarantee the non-Brahmins a large majority of seats, or indeed any majority. It seems sufficient to ensure them such a start in the race as will prevent their being outdistanced if they exercise ordinary energy and intelligence. In this connection it is impossible to overlook the very great preponderance of the non-Brahmins in the electoral rolls, which they themselves put, on a moderate computation, as 8 to 1.... I do not therefore advise the reservation of an absolute majority of seats in the territorial Hindu electorates for non-Brahmins. Such a course would place the non-Brahmins in a position of security which might tend to impair their cohesion and encourage sectional differences. On the other hand, something less than clear majority would ensure an effective voice for the interests of their community in the council, while it would leave them with a healthy stimulus to strive in the competition of the polls, for a representation more closely related to their numerical superiority.¹⁸⁶

Lord Meston gave an award of 28 seats to non-Brahmins which fell short of the expectations of not only the leaders of the Justice Party but also of the Brahmin leaders like Kasturi Ranga Iyengar. In an editorial under the caption 'Lord Meston's Award' *The Hindu* wrote :

"The decision of Lord Meston to reserve 28 seats for non-Brahmins is a matter of much surprise to us. In view of the acute controversy which has raged round the question for sometime past it is bound to cause profound disappointment and grave disquiet among the non-Brahmin community."¹⁸⁷ The Justice Party was totally unhappy over the award of Lord Meston. Indeed the Justices lost in Madras what they imagined to have obtained in London.¹⁸⁸ Non-Brahmin associations all over the presidency organised protest meetings and passed resolutions condemning the award. It was described as a Brahmin influenced award, meant to build up Brahmin oligarchy.¹⁸⁹ Lord Meston's Award, though settled the question of separate representation for the non-Brahmins, as *The Hindu* remarked, embittered them and stiffened

their attitude towards the Brahmins. Instead of fostering harmony, it created suspicion and jealousy among Brahmins and non-Brahmins. However, it cannot be denied that this award gave a special protection to the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency by means of a statute, which could be considered a first political triumph.¹⁹⁰ The verdict of Meston, though unpalatable to the members of the Justice Party, was salutary in one respect. It stimulated in them a spirit of loyalty and devotion in 1920 that they never possessed before.

Conclusion

The era of Dr. T. M. Nair which witnessed a steady and unstinted growth and development of the Justice Party, forms a significant chapter in the history of Non-Brahmin movement. Dr. Nair carried the banner of non-Brahmin far and wide. Under his able guidance and leadership the Justice Party made rapid strides. Its ideology captured the imagination of even mute millions. The relentless fight that this party waged for communal representation for over three years was an epic saga in which Dr. Nair played the role of a martyr. The loss that the party suffered due to his death was amply made good of by the forceful personality of Theagaraya Chetti, a veteran leader of the Justice Party who saved the party from going into wilderness immediately after the demise of Dr. Nair. In fact it was he who took the party to its halcyon days. When the Montford Reforms were introduced the Justice Party which emerged as a democratic force under his able leadership readily came forward to experiment diarchy in Madras Presidency in order to achieve some of its cherished goals through constitutional means.¹⁹¹

CHAPTER III

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83. T. Varadarajulu Naidu (comp.), *The Justice Movement 1917*, Section I, p. 67.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
86. According to the Census of 1911, the Brahmins numbered only 1,167,095 out of the total population of 41,870,160.
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167. T. A. V. Nathan (ed.), *The Justice Year Book 1929*, section IV, p. 18. It is interesting to note that A. R. Mudaliar met the Simon Commission after 10 years as the leader of the Justice Party deputation.
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171. *Justice*, 26 Nov. 1919 (Madras NNR, 1919).
172. In 1919 elections (conducted under the Minto-Morley Reforms) eleven non-Brahmins and four Brahmins were elected.
173. *Dravidan*, 28 Jan. 1920 (Madras NNR, 1920).
174. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, G. A. Natesan, M. Ramachandra Rao, T. Ranga Achariyar, L. A. Govindaraghava Aiyar, S. Kasturiranga Iyengar and B. V. Narasimha Aiyar represented the Brahmins. P. Kesava Pillai and V. Chakkarai Chetti were the spokesmen of the Madras Presidency Association. P. Theagaraya Chetti, P. Ratnarayaningar, K. V. Reddi Naidu, the Rajah of Ramnad, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and A. Subbarayulu Reddiar were the representatives of the Justice Party.
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CHAPTER IV

Ideology, Organisation and Programme of the Justice Party

Introduction

The Justice Party which emerged during the bustle of the First World War admirably possessed all the characteristic features attributed to a political party by Edmund Burke¹, one of the greatest parliamentarians that England has ever produced. A body of 'non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence' assembled at the historic Victoria Public Hall in Madras on 20th November 1916, as it has been noted already and resolved to start a political organisation under the name of 'South Indian Liberal Federation' for promoting by their joint endeavours, the political interests of the non-Brahmin communities. The Federation had a President, four Vice-Presidents and a Treasurer as its office-bearers. Its first President was P. Rajarathna Mudaliar. P. Ramarayaningar, P. Theagaraya Chetti, K. G. Ahmedthamby Marcoir and M. G. Arogiasami Pillai were its Vice-Presidents. P. M. Sivagnana Mudaliar, P. Narayanaswamy Mudaliar, Mohamad Usman and M. Govindarajulu Naidu served as its secretaries. The Treasurer was one G. Narayanaswami Chettiar.² The heart and soul of the party was Dr. T. M. Nair who did nothold any office. However, as stated earlier, he took

up the responsibility of editing *Justice*, the English daily of the party. P. Theagaraya Chetti who was also the secretary-cum-manager of the South Indian People's Association (the Joint stock company) was the pivot of the Justice Party. The journals of the party run by that Joint stock company owed their continued circulation inspite of financial stress and strain, only due to his resourcefulness.

The Objects of the Party

The South Indian Liberal Federation declared its objects in October 1917. They were :

- (a) to promote the educational, social, economic, political, material and moral progress of all communities of South India other than Brahmins.
- (b) to discuss public questions and make true and timely representations to the government the views and interests of the people of South India, with the object of safeguarding and promoting their interests ;
- (c) to disseminate by public lectures, by distribution of literature and by other means, thereby to create public opinion.

Members of the Liberal Federation were averse to any violent and sudden constitutional change which would impair the authority of the British Government which alone they expected could hold the scales even, between creed and class. They were however, strongly in favour of progressive political development and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. In their view, the time for the grant of complete self-government to India had not yet come.

Any one from Southern India of not less than 21 years of age other than Brahmins was eligible for membership of the Federation. Students of any school or college other than graduates were not eligible for membership.³

The Head Office of the Federation was situated at 13-A, Mount Road, Madras, where the office of the South Indian People's Association also functioned.

Justice Party—A Movement but not a Political Faction

The Justice Party represented not only the aspirations of the non-Brahmin communities but also symbolised their long smouldering fear and suspicion towards the Brahmins. It was a well organised attempt by an elite group who were politically articulate to establish the identity of the non-Brahmin communities.⁴ Its policies and programmes make it evident that it was a party organised on the 'liberal British tradition' with a tinge of French radicalism. It believed in the principles of parliamentary democracy and social equality of all sections of people. Hence its challenge to the preponderance of Brahmins. The Kumara Rajah of Chellapalli in his presidential address at the Second Non-Brahmin Confederation held on 11th January 1919, elucidated the ideals for which the Justice Party stood :

Our movement is broad-based on the people's will and is in direct antagonism to all class monopoly. Ours is the real democratic movement of the country ; the one movement which seeks to give to the people the heritage that is rightly theirs, which tries to make the voice of the people really the voice of God ; a movement which seeks not for the aggrandisement of any individual or caste, which tries not to vest power in any close oligarchy, but which attempts, by educating the masses to a sense of their own position and by instilling into them a sense of their own dignity, to make them realise the destiny that is theirs ; such a movement cannot but be a democratic movement.⁵

The aim of the Justice Party was not simply to challenge the influence of a faction like the Mylapore clique. Some of its programmes were not only broad-based but were far ahead of the times. It was a well-conceived political party with definite social and political ideologies. Politically it aimed at getting the power of the government transferred to the hands of non-Brahmins.

Socially it was a revolt against *Varnashrama Dharma*. To call it a faction betrays lack of understanding of its composition. It was a political party started with a manifesto which proclaimed its objectives. Even the initial meeting that the non-Brahmin leaders held in Victoria Public Hall on 20th November 1916 was not an *in camera* meeting like that of the First Indian National Congress which met from 28th to 30th December 1885 in the hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College in Bombay.⁶ Unlike the 70 odd delegates of the Indian National Congress who did not even know each other personally in advance, the non-Brahmin leaders who started the party were 'gentlemen of power and influence' not only of the city of Madras but of various mofussil centres. It is clear from the above that the Justice Party was not just a loose faction interested in city affairs, but a movement with certain ideologies oriented towards the betterment of the mute millions.

Its Leadership and the Rank and File

Though the Justice Party was engineered by the combined efforts of a skilled physician, Dr. T. M. Nair and a mercantile magnate, P. Theagaraya Chetti, it did not fail to attract shrewd politicians, landholders, accomplished artisans, honest labourers and sturdy ryots. It was "drawn almost exclusively from socially stable element of the urban population" such as the Chetti, Nair, Naidu, Reddi and Mudaliar. However, it also spoke for the illiterate non-Brahmin masses of Madras Presidency.⁷ It comprised people of various professions, callings and categories, like barristers, university graduates, newspaper editors, well-to-do traders and landed aristocrats. Actually they represented the cream of non-Brahmin intelligentsia. In comparison with the teeming millions of the non-Brahmin castes they were, beyond doubt, a minority but a potent minority capable of challenging the preponderance of Brahmins. As Hardgrave states, they formed a tightly knit elite imbued with progressive social ideas. It is true that their contact with the masses was not wide. However, they acted in the larger interests of the non-Brahmin communities as a whole. They were essentially their political spokesmen.

The view of Hardgrave, therefore, that the S.I.L.F. "made no attempt to draw the mass following"⁸ is unacceptable. Its vigorous propaganda of the non-Brahmin creed, its innumerable publications, its running of both English and native language newspapers and above all, its endeavours to organise conferences and confederations in every nook and corner of the Presidency of Madras and even beyond Peninsular India evidently speak of its efforts to give itself a mass base. Under Montford Reforms, the franchise was limited and there were only a few thousand voters in each constituency. There was absolutely no need for it to mobilise support at a broader level. Yet it expressed distinctly the grievances of the inarticulate sections of the non-Brahmins.

The slogan of the Justice Party that 'Justice for all and injustice to none' caught the imagination of many who had been trampled down for centuries by the oppressive system of *Varna-shrama Dharma*. The party from the beginning advocated communal representation. It carried a vigorous campaign on almost all platforms and did effective canvassing both within India and without. Much cohesion and solidarity were found among the rank and file of the party. The ideals, the leaders set for themselves, were devotedly followed by the followers. "Self-aggrandisement was the least of the infirmities that motivated their actions."⁹ At the same time the Congress Party at the provincial level did not enlist so much of support and confidence of the people as the Justice Party. On the eve of the Montford Reforms, Justice Party was free from internal squabbles and there was no dissension among the followers over its political aims and methods.¹⁰ When the party resolved to experiment the Reforms, none, either the top ranking leaders or anyone from the rank and file, questioned its decision.

The Constitution of the Party

In the embryonic stage the party was guided by a set of rules and regulations framed by Dr. T. M. Nair. The same was given to the press by the secretary of the S.I.L.F. on 17th October 1917 and it appeared in the columns of *The Hindu* the next day.¹¹ It created an Executive committee consisting of 25 members, in

addition to a President, four Vice-Presidents, four Secretaries and a Treasurer to manage the S.I.L.F. and required it to meet at least once a month. The members of the Executive committee were elected at the annual meeting of the Federation. They held office only for one year but they were eligible for re-election. Anyone who desired to become a member of the Federation had to apply in form A, (copy of which is included in the appendices) and he would become member only on the acceptance of his application by the Executive committee. Its proceedings were recorded in a minutes book. The general body of the Federation was to meet at least once in a year and it could be convened as often as the Executive committee might resolve.

These rules and regulations were often changed. However the leaders made a sincere attempt to offer a constitution to their party immediately after the first elections (1920) under Montford Reforms. Accordingly, a committee to draft a constitution was appointed as soon as the Justice Party formed its ministry.

It was only at the Ninth Non-Brahmin Confederation which met at Madras on 19th December 1925, the draft constitution was placed before it for its approval. Every aspect of the constitution was discussed thoroughly and finally adopted unanimously. As it had been adopted on the eve of the elections of 1926, the high command of the party perhaps hesitated to have a complete change of the office-bearers by holding an election. The assertion of C. J. Baker that "in 1929 and 1930 there was not even an annual confederation"¹⁹ was nothing but a parody of facts. The historic Nellore Confederation where Muniswami Naidu was elected the President of the Party was held on 5th and 6th October 1929. An unique feature of this Confederation was that a Social Conference was also organised alongside on the morning of 6th October 1929 under the presidency of A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, the then father of the city of Madras. The very fact that in 1930 elections the Justice Party emerged victorious and formed its ministry, proves that the party engine had energy to operate and had not become defunct as is portrayed by the Cambridge scholar.

The President of the Party

Article 6 of the constitution laid down that the President of the Federation was the leader of the party who controlled both wings of the party :

- (a) All urban and rural non-Brahmin associations, professing the principles and policies of the Federation and affiliated to it ; and
- (b) The party in the Legislative Council.

P. Theagaraya Chetti—The White-Robed Saint

P. Theagaraya Chetti who became the leader of the party after Dr. T. M. Nair by virtue of his position as the co-sponsor of the Non-Brahmin movement was well recognised as the accredited leader of the Justice Party. He was the first non-official President of the Madras Corporation and he was a councillor of the Corporation for over forty years. When Justice Party came to power he was an old man with sixty eight years of life behind. He declined the offer of Chief Ministership perhaps due to his old age. However his influence both on the members of the legislature and on the rank and file of the party was formidable. He chose ministers and directed them on all issues of vital importance by remaining outside the council of ministers.' J. Charles Molony describes him as 'the Nestor among his fellow councillors'. "He was an absolutely honest man ; in a country where morality does not always attain to a very high level he led a blameless life."¹³ "There was something oddly tigerish in his appearance when he was angry ; he had fierce bright eyes, bushy white eye brows, and a bristling white moustache. He was a good humoured old tiger too, one that bore no malice."¹⁴

His spartan simplicity, unobtrusive modesty, kind disposition and suave manners earned him the reverential appellation of 'white-robed saint.' Yet he was a man of sturdy independence. He kept up his self-dignity on all occasions at any cost. When the Prince of Wales visited Madras, P. Theagaraya Chetti who was

then the President of the Madras Corporation was requested to receive him in official robe but he received the Prince only in his usual white robe.¹⁵ His capacity to inspire devotion and loyalty among the members of the party was tremendous.

More than Dr. Nair, it was P. Theagaraya Chetti who popularised the creed of non-Brahminism. But for him, the party would have succumbed to the heavy financial odds that the party confronted. and *Justice*, the English organ of the party would have had a premature death. It is wrong to assume that under his leadership "the social reform orientation of the party was blunted."¹⁶ The social ideas of P. Theagaraya Chetti were clearly set forth in his welcome address as the chairman of the Reception Committee of the First Non-Brahmin Confederation. He laid emphasis during the course of his talk that the welfare of the non-Brahmin community would be promoted "when they would "break off from the trammels of hereditary priesthood and put an end to *Varnashrama Dharma* with its ethics of Sudra and untouchable and men of all castes and creeds shall live as brothers, and form one nation."¹⁷ Though he was a determined enemy of the Brahmin oligarchy he had no grouse against innocent and poor Brahmins. His friendship with persons like Justice Kumaraswami Sastri who vigorously campaigned for the former in 1921 elections is an eloquent testimony to his catholicity.

The Rajah of Panagal—An Inspiring Guide

His successor, the Rajah of Panagal, though an aristocrat by birth was a democrat in spirit. He was a non-Brahmin to the core, but had studied Sanskrit language and literature and had attained extraordinary proficiency in that language. He was an erudite scholar and a politician of high mental calibre. Though he was branded by the Brahmins as communalist he showed his great-heartedness by nominating Sadasiva Iyer as the commissioner of the Hindu Religious Endowment Board. However it must be conceded that he wrested political power from their exclusive monopoly and paved the way for the silent transformation of the leadership of the state to the non-

Brahmins. To quote S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Rajah Sahib “had singular gifts of leadership, tact and of high diplomacy. He not only led his party with remarkable success but ... he fought the bureaucracy with even greater skill and courage.”¹⁸ The spectacular legislative achievements of the Justice Party in the initial years of diarchy were due solely to his endeavours. His death on 16th December 1928 left the Justice Party leaderless. The party was like a ship without a captain.

A Great Deadlock

The constitution of the party did not speak anything about the mode of election of the president. The Nellore Confederation—the Eleventh Annual Confederation of the Justice Party—where the three groups of non-Brahmins, the S.I.L.F., the Ministerialists and the Constitutionalists met on 5th and 6th August 1929, mainly for the purpose of electing a new leader for the Justice Party, presented a hectic political scene. Taking advantage of the lacuna in the constitution of the party, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, a new entrant to the party moved a resolution that a working committee be elected to guide the policy and programme of the Federation. It had created an impasse. A. R. Mudaliar found out a key to the deadlock by simplifying the issue and gave a solution in his characteristic way by moving an amendment to the resolution of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. Accordingly the President of the confederation should be the leader of the S.I.L.F. till the next session. R. K. Shanmugham Chetti who heartily endorsed the proposal of A. R. Mudaliar formally moved that

under the constitution it is stated that “the President shall be the leader of the party.” I propose that “the President of the confederation for this year shall be the ex-officio President under the constitution, and as such the ex-officio leader of the party until the next confederation meets.’ In making this proposal, neither I, nor those who have sponsored it, are making any serious departure. This is the practice which has been observed in the Indian National Congress for the last forty-two years. Whether this will become a permanent feature of the constitution is too early to say. In any case, to get out of the impasse and to remove the

stigma that they were a stock without a leader let us get over this difficulty, this temporary difficulty at any rate, by electing the President of the confederation as the leader for the year.¹⁹

Supporting the proposal of R. K. Shanmugham Chetti, P. Subbaroyan, Chief Minister spoke. "As my friend from Coimbatore, R. K. Shanmugham Chetty put it, this is certainly a way out of the impasse..... this is the best conclusion we could have arrived at under the circumstances. I feel that in having Muniswami Naidu as our leader, we will be doing the right thing, because he possesses tact in immense quantities. He also possesses other virtues which few possess, e.g., patience in tons. When such is the case, I think the ship, which is to reach the haven, is entrusted to the right hand of a right captain". The proposal of R. K. Shanmugham Chetti was wholeheartedly endorsed by speakers like S. Kumaraswami Reddiar and P. T. Rajan. As a result, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker withdrew his original resolution and the resolution of R. K. Shanmugham Chetti was unanimously carried amidst thunderous cheers. Thus came the elevation of Muniswami Naidu to the leadership of the party.

Muniswami Naidu—A Peasant Leader

For the first time the Justice Party had chosen an agriculturist as its leader. But the party which was well disciplined and closely-knit under the guidance of the Rajah of Panagal turned out to be a cockpit of factions with full of infighting. Unfortunately Muniswami Naidu lacked the fortitude of Dr. T. M. Nair and the political sagacity of the Rajah of Panagal. At Nellore as has been stated already the leaders of the Justice Party evolved the convention of making the President of the annual confederation the leader of the party as well in order that the party might not disintegrate. Somehow or other he failed to take steps to convene the annual confederation for the next three years perhaps to cling to the office of the President. It helped him to become the Chief Minister of Madras after the 1930 elections. However his ascendancy to the position of the Chief Minister marked the beginning

of the end of the Justice Party and it speeded up its disintegration. The appointment of P. T. Rajan and S. Kumaraswami Reddiar as ministers ignoring the aspirations of the Nattukkottai Chetti bankers and the Velama zamindars created a schism in the party. Added to this, his anti-zamindari campaign along with his friend, N. G. Ranga alienated the Velama zamindars to a greater extent.

The Rajah of Bobbili—The Last of the Romans

In the meantime, the Twelfth Annual confederation of the Justice Party was organised at Tanjore on 10th and 11th October 1932. The Rajah of Bobbili was chosen to preside over it. The proceedings of the confederation presented a battle scene between the followers of Muniswami Naidu and those of Rajah of Bobbili reminding the ' Surat imbroglio ' of the Indian National Congress. " Furniture were thrown in fierce hatred, shoes were hurled out with shrieks and imprecations and mud and stones were strewn with maniacal fury and wrath, the confederation became a bear-garden of confusion."⁸⁰

It is believed that this disturbance was purposely initiated by the Kammas attending the confederation with the idea of enabling Muniswami Naidu to continue in party leadership. In spite of this, the Rajah of Bobbili read out his printed speech and established his status as the chosen leader of the party. Thus the Tanjore confederation deposed Muniswami Naidu, the peasant leader, and enthroned the youthful Bobbili, a landed aristocrat of Padmanayak Velama family of northern circars. The ascendancy of the Rajah of Bobbili to the position of the Chief Ministership stunned his political opponents who went on issuing torrential press statements everyday in critical tone in order to tarnish the name of the party and its leader.⁸¹ He had tough time to bring round the various factions in the party. Under his leadership, the party organisation had not made any progress but shrank still further. It had only a precarious survival. The party which had been rocked by internal wrangles lost its image. His aristocratic posture was often mistaken as autocratic one. Though efficient as administrator he was inaccessible to his partymen.

In short, the Rajah of Bobbili who led the party in his own dictatorial way allowed it to march along the path of disintegration rather than regeneration. He was 'the last of the Romans' under whose leadership the Justice Party hastened to a fall.

The City Branch of the S.I.L.F.

The city branch of the S.I.L.F. was the vital sector of the party which had able theorists in its ranks. The policies and programmes of the party were mostly formulated by them in consultation with the leader of the party who normally resided at Madras. Of all the branches of S.I.L.F. the city branch had an independent status of its own. In view of its growing importance it was permitted even to register itself separately²⁹ and allowed to frame rules and regulations of its own. The address of the President of the annual confederation was usually prepared by the city branch, and it was in all respects a policy note of the party.

The Executive Committee

The leaders of the Justice Party were enamoured of the British Parliamentary traditions. In order to maintain contact between the members of the party in the legislature and the party organisation outside, the framers of the constitution made the chief whip of the party the Chairman of the Executive committee. He was to preside over all its meetings. One of the remarkable personalities who added dignity to this office was P. T. Rajan, who acted as the chief whip of the party during the 1930s. As a strong upholder of democratic traditions, he never allowed the decency and decorum of the House to be marred by any untoward incident on any occasion.

Article 14 of the constitution gave the details of the composition of the executive committee. The following were the members :

- (a) The officers of the Federation ex-officio, other than the President and Vice-Presidents ;

- (b) Two representatives from each district selected by the District Associations ;
- (c) Twelve members from Madras ; and
- (d) Such number of members not exceeding sixteen, as may be co-opted by the Executive committee for the proper representation of unrepresented communities and classes, including Backward and Depressed classes.

Article 17 of the constitution demarcated the duties of the Executive committee. It was the sole agency through which the meetings of the S.I.L.F. and the annual confederation were to be arranged and organised. The Executive committee had the responsibility of implementing the resolutions passed at the meetings of the Federation and confederation. It was incumbent upon the Executive committee to organise election campaigns at the time of elections to the Provincial and Imperial Legislative bodies. The collection of funds for the party was one of the responsibilities, vested with this body. Finally it was the onus of this council to send the nominations of the office-bearers to the General Body for its consideration.

The General Secretary

The General Secretary was the mainspring of the Federation. As the executive officer of the party he had to act under the orders of the Executive committee. His office was a miniature secretariat where the correspondence work of the party was largely carried on. It was his prime duty to carry out the orders and the resolutions passed by the Executive committee and to deal with all administrative affairs, not specifically assigned either to the Chairman or to the other office-bearers. He was the convener of all meetings of the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. All the more he was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining a permanent record of all proceedings both of the Executive committee and of the general meetings of the S.I.L.F. and in addition to this, he should maintain a register of the members of all the Branch Associations both at the headquarters and in the districts.

A. Ramaswami Mudaliar—A Torch-bearer of Liberty

A notable figure who added lustre to the office of the Secretary of the Justice Party was A. Ramaswami Mudaliar. As a trusted lieutenant of both T. M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti, he toiled for the steady and rapid growth of the party. His inspiring speeches and matchless eloquence on many a platform from Belgaum to Bellary and from Ganjam to Cape Camorin attracted innumerable young men and women towards the Justice Party. As an authoritative spokesman of the party he theorised every aspect of the non-Brahmin ideology. For this reason he had been described as 'the brain of the Justice Party.'²³ "If he expounded the tenets of the party with Gladstonian authority, he espoused its interests with Hampden-like vigilance."²⁴ (As the torch-bearer of liberty and social justice, he carried the flag of his party even beyond the frontiers of the Presidency and organised the First All India Non-Brahmin Congress at Belgaum on 28th December 1924 and added a new dimension to the activities of the party.) "In elaborate defence of the party's actions and in eloquent propagation of its principles none had done anything like Mr. Mudaliar."²⁵ When the party after its setback in 1926 elections was frantically in search of an editor for its organ, *Justice*, A. R. Mudaliar came forward to shoulder the burden of running that 'democratic daily'. From the time of his assumption of the editorial chair, the popularity of the paper rose high and its circulation became wider. For over a decade he functioned as the Chief Editor of the paper. (He was ably assisted by an excellent team of Editorial Board, of whom T. A. V. Nathan was a prolific penman. The lofty traditions laid down by Dr. T. M. Nair and P. N. Ramanpillai were scrupulously followed by Mudaliar.) He made the paper a pillar of strength to the party. His writings were full of satire and sarcasm.) The Swarajists in general, and the Brahmins in particular, were the main target of his attack.²⁶ In spite of the financial distress with which the party organ suffered often, he was able to give it a continued existence till he relinquished his editorship due to his appointment to the Tariff Board in 1935.

District Associations

The District Associations of the S.I.L.F. were the pillars over which the edifice of the Justice Party was erected. These were the machinery, geared up to work both at the time of elections and at the time of holding conferences. Article 22 of the constitution of the party gives the details of how these associations functioned.

There shall be a District Branch of the South Indian Liberal Federation in each District with Sub-Branchees. A subscription of As. 4 in one instalment per annum shall entitle any non-Brahmin subscribing to the objects of the Federation to become a member of the District Association of any of its Branches. The office of the District Federation shall be composed of a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. There shall also be an Executive Committee composed of a representative from the Association at the Headquarters of the District and two representatives of every Sub-Branch in the District. The District Executive Committee shall elect its officers and shall also elect two representatives to the Executive Committee of the South Indian Liberal Federation. Each District Association shall contribute 10 per cent of its funds annually to the South Indian Liberal Federation. It shall be competent for the District Association to make Rules and Regulations, Laws and Bye-Laws, not inconsistent with those of the South Indian Liberal Federation, for its own jurisdiction. In case of dispute, the matter shall be referred to the leader for his decision.²⁷

Among the District leaders who laboured much to the cause of Non-Brahmin movement A. T. Pannirselvam, a Cambridge Barrister was conspicuous. From the inception of the party till his tragic end in an air-crash in 1940, he was the principal organiser of the party in the district of Tanjore. He was fittingly assisted by V. Umamaheswaran Pillai of Karanthai Tamil Sangam fame, S. Venugopal Naidu of Pattukottai, N. R. Samiappa Mudaliar of Tirurupaipoondi, V. P. P. Kayaroganam Pillai of Nagapattinam and Kandaswami Moopnar of Kumbakonam. Their power and

influence in the district were formidable. They were the people who controlled the administrative machinery of the district by getting themselves elected to the various units of the local boards. A. T. Pannirselvam occupied the Presidential chair of the District Board of Tanjore more than twice.²⁸ His activities were not confined merely to the district of Tanjore but extended to the metropolitan city of Madras. He was one of those who invaded the centre from the periphery. His legalistic calibre was best utilized by the top leaders of the party whenever it was needed. He was the co-delegate with A. R. Mudaliar to appear before the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) on 1 March, 1929 to give evidence on behalf of the Justice Party. During the dark days of the Justice Party, A. T. Pannirselvam came to the limelight by occupying ministerial position for a short span of three months in K. V. Reddi Naidu's interim government, which was formed after 1937 elections. His vain attempt to rejuvenate the Justice Party when it was at its nadir under the leadership of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker clearly reveals how strongly he was wedded to the philosophy of Non-Brahmin movement.

The Party in the Legislative Council

The leader of the party had been entrusted with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the party in the Legislative Council with the help and advice of the Executive committee. Except in the case of P. Theagaraya Chetti, the leadership of the party within the council and without devolved on the Chief Minister. This principle was enforced both in letter and in spirit ever since the Rajah of Panagal became the patriarch of the Justice Party. After his death, (the Justice Party was then in the opposition) A. P. Patro was chosen the floor leader of the House though not of the party. The party Executive committee in the Legislative Council consisted of not less than one third of the total number of M.L.Cs belonging to the party. It represented various communities and interests, such as Zamindars, Muhammadans, Christians, Depressed Classes, Tamils, Telugus and others. The leader and the whips of the party were its ex-officio members. As per the provisions of the constitution, one third of its members should retire

by rotation every year. However they were eligible for re-election. The whips were the Executives of the party and they were elected at the formation of each new council and they were entitled to hold office for the entire period of the new council. They were mainly responsible for the proper conduct of the work of the party in the council. The Executive committee of the legislature party should meet every month. The ministers were required to consult the whips on all matters concerning the policy of the party and also on matters relating to the interests of the party in the council.

The Finances of the Party

The finances of the Justice party were never sound and this imposed serious restrictions on its activities. The South Indian People's Association, the Joint Stock Company, which was solely started for publishing newspapers in English and in vernacular languages, had not improved its pecuniary position despite the best efforts of its secretary, P. Theagaraya Chetti. The constitution of the party, which made provision for collection of party funds by means of donations and subscriptions in article 20 indicated the following purpose for which the party fund should be devoted :

- (1) The maintenance of the party journals ;
- (2) The publication of pamphlets, leaflets, etc., by the Federation's Publication department.

The running of the journals was a burdensome task for the leaders of the party as it incurred a loss of two to three thousands every month.⁷⁹ This deficiency was often met to the tune of Rs. 65,000/- from the special collections made by the party men. When the Rajah of Bobbili was at the helm of affairs of the party he gave away his salary of Rs. 5,000/- to the Justice Printing Press.⁸⁰

The Laputan Flapper, pseudonym of perhaps an Editorial staff of *Justice*, contributed an article, "The party and the paper" to *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement*, which made an earnest appeal to the subscribers and the members of the party to donate liberally to the party fund so that *Justice* would fight for the rights of the downtrodden. He observed :

When I think of *Justice* the words of the great patriot Subramania Bharathi come to my mind as the haunting melody of a forgotten song. His words are in the form of an appeal and I would commend the appeal to the non-Brahmin community, to the Rajahs, Kumararajahs, landholders and zamindars who are members of the party, and who are interested in the paper and more than all, to the millions and millions of downtrodden non-Brahmins whose cause the *Justice* has advocated The song says :

“ நிதி மிகுந்தவர் பொற்குவை தாரீர்
 நிதி குறைந்தவர் காசுகள் தாரீர்
 அதுவும் அற்றவர் வாய்ச் சொல் அருளீர்
 ஆண்மையாளர் உழைப்பினை நல்கீர்
 எதுவும் நல்கி இங்கெவ்வகை யானும்
 இப் பெருந் தொழில் நாட்டுவம் வாரீர் ”

Let us all non-Brahmins, rich and poor unite and pay our tribute to the *Justice*, the paper of the people.

However, there was not much improvement in the financial position of the party. Its budget always showed a deficit. The party was not able to run the office and the printing press without debt. It is distressing to note that the building adjacent to the Cosmopolitan Club was purchased to locate the office of the party with certain debt on it. The leaders of the Justice Party found it difficult to pay the balance and it resulted in the eviction of the press and the Party office. Thereafter, East Nook, the residence of S. G. Sadagopa Ramanuja Mudaliar (Brother of S. G. Manavala Ramanujam) which was situated opposite to the present Rajaratnam stadium became the premises of the printing press and the office of the Justice Party, which functioned there till it was handed over to E. V. Ramaswami Naicker in 1937.⁸²

The Non-Brahmin Youth League

The elections of 1926 which shattered the strength of the Justice Party and reduced it to the position of an opposition in the Legislative Council, served as an eye-opener to its rank and file

as well as its leaders. The leadership of the party which was a conservative group of men, had not made any effort hitherto to attract the youth of the province. When the Congress broadened its base and emerged as a mass movement under the leadership of Gandhi, the Justice Party also devised its programmes in such a way as to attract the youth of the nation.

The Non-Brahmin Youth league was organised by Ethiraj Surendranath Arya, an active and enthusiastic leader and a close associate of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. He received encouragement from leaders like the Rajah of Panagal, who proved to be "the greatest asset which the youth movement of this country possessed."³³ He was the knight-errant of the Non-Brahmin movement. He proclaimed: "I have taken up the cross, the shield and the sword for the cause of Justice Party which stands for 'liberty, equality fraternity and progress' of all communities. By organising Non-Brahmin Youth conferences in various district centres, the leaders of the Justice Party tried to impress upon the non-Brahmin youth that the hour for action had come and it was their privilege to bring about a great social change. In a leading editorial, A. R. Mudaliar brought forth the significance of the role that the youth had played as 'the rejuvenators of the nation'. "So long as there are young men, pure and undefiled ... free from the coils of ancient superstitions ... there is hope for the country."³⁴

Of all the Non-Brahmin Youth conferences, the one that was held at Tanjore on 26th February 1928 was noteworthy, V. Chakkarai Chetti, (once a leading member of the Madras Presidency Association) was elected the President of the conference. The leaders such as E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, E. S. Arya, Miss. C. D. Valli Nayagam and others were taken in a procession to Sudarsana Sabha, the venue of the conference at 9-00 a.m. A. T. Pannirselvam, the local leader unfurled the flag of the Non-Brahmin Youth league. The proceedings of the conference commenced with recitations from *Thevaram* of Nayanmars and *Thiruvartuppa* of Ramalingaswami.³⁵ It is amply evident from this that E. V. Ramaswami Naicker was not fascinated by the

philosophy of atheism even in the beginning of 1928 and the Justice Party kept itself far from the madding group which professed atheism as its ethics of life. The opening address was delivered by Miss. Valli Nayagam who highlighted the worthy role that the non-Brahmin youth could play. "One of the first things to which we must turn our attention is the evils of the caste system, which is seriously hindering our social advancement."³⁶ Further she spoke on the necessity of eradicating illiteracy. At the concluding part of her speech she emphasised that as long as women were kept down in the low level in which they were at present, it was not possible for them to progress. One important feature of the conference was that it attracted even those non-Brahmins who had been keeping away from the ambit of the Non-Brahmin movement for sometime in the past.

As far as the Tanjore district was concerned the work of the Non-Brahmin league was commendable. The members of the league helped to increase the circulation of the party organs, *Justice* and *Dravidan* by working as honorary agents and correspondents of these dailies. The services of these selfless workers were appreciated by A. R. Mudaliar and T. A. V. Nathan who managed and edited the papers.³⁷

The series of Non-Brahmin Youth conferences convened and conducted all over the presidency was an attempt to rejuvenate the Justice Party which had already lost its force and vigour. Since it organised conferences continuously for nearly three years, its impact on the youth was telling. It brought leaders like E. V. Ramaswami Naicker to the forefront of Non-Brahmin movement. However the internal faction which erupted after the Nellore Confederation threw cold water on the enthusiasm of the youngsters. Thereafter the mechanism of the party almost came to a standstill and the leaders of Justice Party did not take any effort to organise either an annual confederation or a Youth league conference.

E. V. Ramaswami Naicker who was disenchanted with the political ideology of the Justice Party turned towards social reform as he believed that social reform was the basis for all progress.

When the leadership of the Justice Party was thrust upon him after its debacle in 1937 elections, he almost destroyed its political character by drifting away from the track beaten by Dr. T. M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetti.

The Conferences and Confederations of the Party

The avowed intention of the leaders of the Justice Party in organising conferences at district centres and convening annual conferences was to make the principles and programmes of the party known to the public. The series of party conferences that the year 1917 witnessed, clearly showed that the Justice Party had a definite political goal. Article 21 of the constitution specifically stated that a provincial confederation should be convened once in a year. It was the platform where the policy note of the party was enunciated and approved in the form of resolutions. As far as this party was concerned this forum was the supreme body. In theory the annual confederation could alter any feature of the party. In this connection it is worth recalling that at the Nellore Confederation in 1929 an abortive attempt was made by B. Muniswami Naidu, the President of the confederation to alter the basic tenet of the party, viz., the exclusion of Brahmins from becoming members of the party. Thus the annual confederation was a significant occasion where the vital questions of the party were determined.

The Subjects Committee

The subjects committee was a small representative body of about 150 persons to draw up a programme of work for the confederation. They were elected by delegates of each district. Usually it met immediately after the opening session to review the proceedings, and to draft the resolutions to be taken up on the succeeding day of the confederation. The speakers to move the resolutions were also chosen by this committee. All important business of the confederation was gradually transferred to this body which used to sit privately. The public sittings of the annual confederation were soon limited to merely formal passing of the resolutions agreed to in the subjects committee. This procedure

was followed by the Justice Party only as a matter of convention but not as a matter of principle enshrined in the constitution of the party.

The concluding part of the session was meant usually for moving the resolutions and for getting them seconded and adopted. Any delegate could have the privilege to move an amendment or propose a new resolution in the general session. However the agenda prepared by the subjects committee was strictly adhered to. The annual confederation of the Justice Party was an enthusiastic gathering but an expensive affair. However it was a display of the strength and support that the party commanded from its followers. Above all, it gave an opportunity for the participants to get categorical information from the top leaders of the party about its policies and programmes.

The Banner of Non-Brahminism beyond the Frontiers of the Presidency

(1) First All-India Non-Brahmin Congress at Belgaum

The Non-Brahmin movement in peninsular India achieved spectacular success. The leaders of the various regions felt the necessity of amalgamating "the different provinces in the movement to concentrate and consolidate their forces and to focus and formulate their opinions on a common platform."³⁸ The idea of bringing about unity among the Non-Brahmin movements of various regions of South India was mooted by A. R. Mudaliar at the Seventh Non-Brahmin Confederation held at Madras on 11th October 1924.³⁹ The unity move was due to the realisation of the leaders of the Non-Brahmin movement that until and unless "there was some amount of co-operate activity on the part of all (non-Brahmins) these communities and parties, the political goal of the country was not likely to be hastened."⁴⁰ The proposal of holding an All-India Non-Brahmin Congress assumed definite shape when the representatives of the Non-Brahmin movements of different provinces met at Bombay in November 1924. The Conference at Belgaum on 28th December 1924 was the corollary

of the decision taken there. For the first time the different non-Brahmin organisations of South India were united into a single all-India body. The Non-Brahmin Congress resembled the Annual Indian National Congress in all respects. M. R. Sakhare, the Chairman of the Reception committee while welcoming the audience pointed out that "the Non-Brahmin Party was not at all a tool in the hands of the government."

A. R. Mudaliar, the President of the Congress after enumerating the achievements of the Madras non-Brahmin Ministry in the course of his talk had not failed to point out that provincial autonomy with responsible government was alone the remedy for the defects of the Montford Reforms. The object of the All-India Non-Brahmin Congress was put in the shape of a resolution which runs as follows :

- (a) The object of the All-India Non-Brahmin Congress shall be the attainment of Swaraj or Home Rule for India as a component part of the British Empire at as early a date as possible by all peaceful, legitimate and constitutional means, by promoting goodwill and amity among the different communities of India, through safeguarding their interests by means of communal representation, and by social amelioration and reorganisation.
- (b) Every person who is not a Brahmin and who is over 21 years of age shall be eligible to become a member of the Non-Brahmin Congress.
- (c) Every delegate to the Congress shall express in writing his acceptance of the above object of the Congress and his willingness to abide by this constitution and by the rules framed thereunder.
- (d) The All-India Non-Brahmin Congress Organisation will consist of :
 1. The All-India Non-Brahmin Congress.
 2. The Provincial Non-Brahmin Congress committees.

3. The District Non-Brahmin Congress committees.
4. The Sub-divisional or Taluka Non-Brahmin Congress committees affiliated to the District Non-Brahmin Congress committees.
5. Political Associations or Public bodies recognised by the Provincial Non-Brahmin Congress committee.
6. The All-India Non-Brahmin Congress committee.

(2) The Second All-India Non-Brahmin Congress

The Second All-India Non-Brahmin Congress met at Amraoti on 27th December 1925. It was a three-day Congress. It had all the splendour and pomp of an all-India gathering. The bulk of the people who thronged in a very big pandal of the Congress were mostly Maharashtrians. A good number of Justices including prominent party leaders from Madras attended the Congress. The Maharajah of Kolhapur hosted the Congress. In consonance with his royal status, lavish tea parties and dinners were arranged for the delegates. The Rajah of Panagal, the Chief Minister of Madras, presided over the Congress. The key note of his presidential address was the demand for more powers to the provinces.

Before dissolving the session, the president impressed upon the audience the necessity for relentless propaganda of the aims and ideals of Non-Brahmin movement among the non-Brahmin masses and made a special appeal to the young men of Central India.

Come out of your insular conservatism, give up the idea that you are inferior to anyone else, let this *maya* of self-depreciation be cast off and you will find that you have the blood of heroes in your veins and that you could indeed play a most glorious part in the rejuvenation of your motherland,

And when that message is broadcast, when the aims and ideals of our movement are interpreted to the commonfolk, the humble citizens living in the peaceful atmosphere of the village far from the madding crowd, when in fact the potentialities of this great movement are appreciated by the masses, then would dawn the great day for this ancient land, the day when indeed the banner of Swaraj could be unfurled. It is to hasten that day we have met here and I have no doubt that if we preserve along these lines and work with a steady and earnest zeal, we shall be serving the best interests of the country.⁴¹

Thus the leaders of the Justice Party endeavoured to give to their organisation an all-India base by linking themselves with Non-Brahmin movements of the Deccan more particularly with that of Kolhapur. As a prelude to this, they brought forth a co-ordination between the non-Brahmin party of Bombay and the Justice Party by inviting A. B. Lathe, the non-Brahmin leader of Bombay to preside over the Sixth Annual Non-Brahmin Confederation, convened at Madras on 26th December 1922. Similarly O. Thanikachalam Chetti was offered the presidential chair at the Maharashtra Provincial Non-Brahmin Conference which met at Satara on 16th December 1922. Again, B. V. Jadhav was invited by the organisers of the Ninth Non-Brahmin Confederation of the Justice Party held on 19th December 1925 to adorn the presidential chair. Their decision to operate the All-India Non-Brahmin movement from the city of Madras was to achieve greater mobility and cohesion. However, the death of P. Theagaraya Chetti in 1925 and the defeat of the Justice Party in the 1926 elections unnerved the leaders as well as the members of the party. Their enthusiasm got slackened and whittled. Despite the dynamism, tenacity and steadfastness of the Rajah of Panagal to build an all-India non-Brahmin organisation, his efforts and those of his able lieutenant, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, had not paid much dividend. Their attempt became abortive and their scheme, visionary in the changed political atmosphere of 1926.

THE POLICIES AND THE PROGRAMMES OF THE PARTY

1. The Justice Party and the Brahmins

Though the constitution of the Justice party forbade Brahmins to become its members, its attitude towards the Brahmins as a community was not inimical. "The S.I.L.F. was not started as an anti-Brahmin movement but its main aim was the improvement of non-Brahmin communities and the securing of equal opportunities to all communities in the governance of the country." P. Theagaraya Chetti as the chairman of the Reception Committee of the First Non-Brahmin Confederation explained the stand of the party in clear terms with regard to the Brahmins :

Towards the Brahmins we cherish no feeling of bitterness. If we have to fight them, we do so in the interests of truth and justice, and we shall be prepared to extend to them also the right hand of fellowship, when they shall see the wrongs they have inflicted upon us and repent. Ours is essentially a movement of love and not of hate, or love based upon a sense of what is due to the various classes which constitute the population of this vast and ancient land.⁴⁹

However the critics characterised the Justice Party as communal on the basis of its exclusion of Brahmins from its membership. It has been noted that the demise of the Rajah of Panagal gave a stumbling blow to the Non-Brahmin movement. To quote A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, "The ship of the Non-Brahmin Movement was now on high seas without a captain on the foredeck". The rank and file had become thoroughly disillusioned due to the lack of proper leadership. The original Justice Party was already split into three groups viz., S.I.L.F. Constitutionalists and Ministerialists. At this juncture an attempt was made by leaders like Muniswami Naidu, A. P. Patro and A. R. Mudaliar to amalgamate these splinter groups together in order to revitalise the whole work-force of the party. The Ministerialists candidly expressed their willingness to merge with the S.I.L.F. if the ban

imposed on the Brahmins was removed. This move was perhaps to stabilise their position in the Madras Legislative Council. Consequently a tripartite conference was convened at Madras in September 1929, where a resolution was adopted recommending to the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. "to allow such of the Brahmin members of the Legislative Council as agreed to the creed and principles of the party to be admitted to the council party".⁴³

Accordingly the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. drafted a resolution and placed it before the Eleventh Confederation held in October 1929 at Nellore for its approval. In his presidential capacity Muniswami Naidu was obliged to move officially the recommendatory resolution of the Executive committee of S.I.L.F. to allow the Brahmins to enter into the Justice Council Party and spoke thus :

So long as we exclude one community, we cannot as a political body speak on behalf of or claim to represent all the people of our presidency. If, as we hope, full provincial autonomy is given to the provinces as a result of the reforms that may be granted, it is essential that our Federation should be in a position to claim to be a truly representative body of all communities. What objection can there be to admit such Brahmins as are willing to subscribe to the aims and objects of our Federation ? It may be that Brahmins may not join even if the ban is removed. But surely our Federation will not thereafter be open to objection on the ground that it is an exclusive organisation.⁴⁴

A. P. Patro moved the following amendment to the resolution :

That every person, who is willing to subscribe to the creed and aims and objects of the South Indian Liberal Federation and who is willing to abide by the rules framed by the Executive committee, is eligible to become a member of the Federation.⁴⁵

In favour of his amendment, he argued that the stigma of communalism attached to Justice Party could be wiped off if the

Brahmins were admitted into the ranks of the party. He pleaded further that "the time had come for removing the ban and they should not give any longer room for the abuse that they were exclusive and narrowminded in their outlook and in their interest". He argued furthermore that this change was imperative in view of the expected grant of provincial autonomy and the ensuing election. He did not fail to caution that it would be fatal if they did not move with the times and make the changes which were called for by the time-spirit. It was therefore mandatory on the part of the Justicites "to make their party a real political party, representative of all communities in Southern India".

The proposal provoked bitter criticism. The first to raise opposition both to the amendment and to the resolution was R. K. Shanmugham Chetti. He was very much frank in expressing his views. He stated that his own experience, after years of close and intimate association with politicians of the Brahmin community convinced him that they were extremely clannish as a class. He cited several episodes of which the defeat of George Joseph, a Congress candidate in the Madurai Municipal elections was classical. Though his candidature had been sponsored by the Congress Party, the Brahmin Congress men of that particular ward voted practically *en bloc* for an independent Brahmin candidate, who, as a result, emerged victorious. Similarly, Swami Venkatachallam Chetti, he narrated in course of his talk, was defeated in the Presidential election to the Corporation of Madras despite the fact that he contested the election as the Swarajya Party candidate. These instances, he said, were enough to convince the non-Brahmins that "it would be nothing short of a great calamity if they admitted Brahmins into their camp". Endorsing his views E. V. Ramaswami Naicker made an eloquent speech in Tamil and remarked :

At a time when non-Brahmins in other parties were gradually coming over to the Justice Party, being fed up with the Brahmin's ways and methods of dealing with political questions, it was nothing short of folly to think of admitting him into the ranks of the Justice Party.¹⁶

Both the amendment of A. P. Patro and the original resolution of the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. were thrown out by a huge majority when they were put to the vote.

The issue of admitting the Brahmins into the Justice Party was kept alive as far as 1934 by a few enthusiasts who took fancy in reviving this question. They repeated the arguments of the old stalwarts like A.P. Patro. They contended that "admitting Brahmins into the Justice Party was a matter of right tactics and calculated to be in the best future interests of the organisation. In view of the Reforms that were expected shortly, it was felt necessary that the ban on the entry of Brahmins into their Party should be removed."⁴⁷ Even the members of the Executive committee of S.I.L.F. considered their contention with sympathy and passed a resolution to that effect at its Thirteenth Confederation due to the initiative of the new leader of the Party, the Rajah of Bobbili. This raised a storm of protests. The leading non-Brahmins of the city convened a public meeting on July 2, 1934 at the High Court Beach to consider this question. Many of the Justice Party leaders who spoke on the occasion expressed a genuine fear that by the entry of the Brahmins into the Justice Party the progress of the Non-Brahmin movement would be gravely impeded and its essential creed of non-Brahminism would be destroyed. At the end of the meeting they adopted a resolution requesting "the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. to withdraw, before the end of this month, its resolution recommending the entry of Brahmins into the Justice Party." Despite the rough time that the Justice Party had during the thirties of this century, the leaders as well as the members of the party were keen in preserving its basic creed of non-Brahminism. However, it should be pointed out here the cult of non-Brahminism that the Justice Party professed had never become an aggressive force to injure the interests of the Brahmins. Yet it served as a catalyst to a considerable extent in dislodging them from the governmental organisations and educational institutions and also from the formal politics in Tamil Nadu.⁴⁸

2. The Justice Party and the Demand of Self-government

The newly adopted constitution of the Justice Party stated ~~that~~ to obtain Swaraj for India as a component of the British

Empire at as early a date as possible by all peaceful and legitimate and constitutional means" was one of its objects. The word 'Swaraj' which meant 'self-rule' had become a watchword in the political vocabulary of the nation in the 20s of this century. It appealed to every section of Indian people. It therefore became a necessity on the part of the Justicites to adopt the same word 'Swaraj' to demonstrate that they were not against any political and constitutional progress of the nation towards Independence. This word 'Swaraj' was incorporated through the instrumentality of the Madras city branch of the S.I.L.F. of which C. R. Reddy was then the President.⁴⁹ So long as Dr. Nair spearheaded the party the concept of Swaraj was not allowed to captivate the fancy of the members of the party as he considered self-rule a chimera. Only after his exit the Justicites, in tune with the changing trend of the time, adopted the term, Swaraj, in their constitution. Their anti-Congress posture was mistaken often by critics as anti-national. It is erroneous to assume that it was anti-national in its outlook. To quote Baliga again, "it was by no means, as is sometimes supposed, a thoroughly reactionary party.... It was only more moderate than the Congress party and it sought to attain its goal of full responsible government through constitutional methods."⁵⁰ There was much less distinction between the Justice Party and the Congress with regard to their ultimate goal. Both aimed at achieving Swaraj but their means widely varied. For instance, the Montford reforms were accepted by both the parties. Even Gandhi himself pleaded with his party people to work the Reforms of 1919 "in a spirit of genuine co-operation and goodwill". He exhorted them "not to subject the reforms to carping criticism but settle down quietly to work.... for further advance."⁵¹ In a similar tenor the leaders of the Justice Party also spoke. By accepting the reforms they believed "England might yet be induced to grant further and wider reforms and the day might not be far off when India would be placed on a par with the self-governing dominions beyond the seas."⁵² But the subsequent events, viz., the publication of the terms of the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey in May 1920, and the report of the Hunter committee on Amritsar massacre and the acclamation of Dyer's action by 'dishonest and unscrupulous' Britons filled

Indian leaders with indignation, and turned Gandhi, "the great loyalist and co-operator into a rebel and a non-co-operator."⁵³

3. Justice Party and the Non-Co-operation Movement

The Justicites' objective of responsive co-operation with the British Raj made them oppose the campaign of non-co-operation launched by Gandhi. The Fourth Non-Brahmin Confederation of the S.I.L.F. passed a resolution condemning the Non-Co-operation movement of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress as a calculated move "to subvert all constitutional agitation and to bring the country to chaos and anarchy" and calling upon "all patriotic Indians in the best interests of the country to strongly oppose all efforts to preach such doctrines." It was unfortunate that the leadership of Gandhi as well as his Non-Co-operation movement appeared to the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency as substitutes of Mrs. Besant and her Home Rule league. Like Besant, Gandhi also glorified Brahminism and Brahminical caste. His camp followers in Madras were only Brahmins. Mrs. Besant chose C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar as her trusted colleague whereas Gandhi took C. Rajagopalachari as his conscience-keeper.

The Party organ, *Justice* commented on the attitude of Gandhi disparagingly as follows :

What we cannot understand is the attitude of Mr. Gandhi towards non-Brahmins. We know he does not care for facts. He lives and flourishes on frothy emotionalism. If he cared for truth he ought to have admitted that though the Non-Brahmin movement was in existence only for four years, it has produced an awakening among the non-Brahmins, which augurs nothing but good for their future.⁵⁴

An orgy of violence that broke out at Chauri Chaura, the consequent suspension of the Non-Co-operation movement justified what the Justice Party leaders apprehended. Gandhi's identification with Brahminical institutions and culture and his agitational strategem made the Justicites adopt anti-Gandhian posture throughout. Nonetheless the leaders of the Justice Party did not mince words to decry the wrong deeds of the British

authorities. When Gandhi was arrested, a forthright condemnation came from *Justice*.

To say that we are not deeply grieved over the sad fate that has overtaken Mr. Gandhi now is to misrepresent our feelings in the matter. As our readers are aware, we have seldom, if ever, found it possible to see eye to eye with the Mahatma in regard to his political views. But this difference in political opinion has, all the same, never blinded us to a full recognition of the high qualities of moral worth and intellectual capacity that have distinguished the Mahatma and singled him out from among the ranks of patriots and politicians who have figured in the public life of our country in the past. Indeed, in point of patriotism and love for the country, there is scarcely another politician in the India of to-day who could be said to be more disinterested and self-sacrificing than the Mahatma. Nor are there many who could be ranked alongside of him in regard to strength of convictions and purity of character. As a politician, however, the Mahatma, it has to be sadly confessed, has been a failure He has simply thrown away the chance of serving his motherland by unnecessarily provoking the Government into restraining his activities and incarcerating him Of course, the atmosphere of general disaffection towards the Government generated by the teaching of the Mahatma was a favourable one for the evilly-disposed to stir up unrest and create disturbances in the country. To this extent the Mahatma is certainly guilty, but we wonder whether this offence of the Mahatma could be held as sufficiently serious and grave as to warrant the infliction of such a heavy sentence on him now.⁵⁵

4. The Justice Party and the Jallianwalah Bagh Tragedy

It is nothing but distortion of facts on the part of P. Ramamurthy to say that the Justice Party was the only political party in India which had not condemned the massacre of Amritsar.⁵⁶ A careful scrutiny of records will reveal that the leaders of the Justice Party were second to none in denouncing the atrocities

committed by Dyer at Jallianwala Bagh. The Fourth Non-Brahmin Confederation passed resolutions both on Punjab tragedy and on Khilafat movement. This confederation viewed with grave concern the attitude taken by the Imperial Government and British Parliament, especially the House of Lords with regard to the happening in Punjab and the inhuman and high-handed action taken by the authorities in Punjab. It also urged the government to take prompt action to punish all the offenders, irrespective of their positions to vindicate justice, to allay growing discontent and to prevent political agitations from taking advantage of such situation. It is rather surprising how Irschick and P. Ramamurthy have jumped to the conclusion that Justice Party was not willing to condemn the massacre at Amritsar.⁵⁷ This confederation also emphasised with full sense of responsibility the need on the Imperial Government to revise the Treaty of Versailles so as to satisfy the just claim of the Muhammadan population of this country.⁵⁸

In moving the resolution, N. A. V. Somasundaram Pillai disclosed to the audience how the faith in the British justice had been shattered by the publication of the report of the Hunter committee which examined a number of witnesses and submitted its report recommending slight punishments for serious offenders while others were left without punishment. Krishna Nair, in seconding the resolution, observed that the Punjab episode was probably the darkest spot in the history of England, at least in modern times. He also condemned the liberal way in which General Dyer was treated by the British authorities. Further he said that "his way of firing till his ammunition was exhausted and his inhuman treatment of the wounded and above all the inadequate punishment meted out to him had shaken the faith in the British justice and fairplay."⁵⁹

5. The Social Reform Orientation of the Party

Dr. T. M. Nair, the chief exponent of the doctrines of Justice Party, wrote at the inception of the party, a good number of leaders in the columns of *Justice* explaining its social policy. They were documents of inestimable value on the early phase of

Non-Brahmin movement. It was one of the convictions of the Justice Party that the Brahmins were primarily responsible for the degenerate condition of the non-Brahmins. It was they who introduced 'the tyranny of caste' and perpetuated its concomitant evils in the society. The same sentiments were echoed in one of his editorials in *Justice*

... the Hindus who form the majority of the population have been cut up into innumerable castes with the priestly class at the head of the caste hierarchy. Even to day the Hindus are under the tyranny of the usages and customs introduced and maintained by the highest castes. To add to this not less than fifty or sixty millions live outside Hindu society whom that society in its arrogance still regards as Untouchables and Depressed classes. Who was responsible for putting millions of human beings into water-tight compartments? Who inculcated, fostered and nourished the superstitions which now weigh down the enervate India's million?⁶⁰

His lieutenants were equally vigorous in articulating the social policy of their party. K. V. Reddi Naidu enumerated a list of activities to be carried on in the social sphere at Nagapatam conference held on the eve of first elections under the Act of 1919.

Social legislation has to be undertaken and inequitable laws that, for ages, maintained an invidious distinction between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, with regard to marriage, adoption, inheritance and the like, must be altered. Outside the sphere of politics, the work before us is equally onerous. Social reconstruction must be taken in hand at once. Social equality must be established. The strain of untouchability shall be removed. The dictates of priestcraft must be silenced. *Paracheries* must be purified. *Agraharams* must be humanised.... The hold of humiliating customs and rituals must be unloosed. The portals of temples must be thrown broad open. The contents of sealed scriptures should be brought to light.⁶¹

The leaders of the Justice Party were convinced that the social reform should precede the political regeneration. So they did not hesitate to reiterate this theme on their political platforms. At the Fourth Non-Brahmin Confederation held on 8th January 1921, M. Venkataratnam Naidu in his presidential address emphasised the need to give priority to social reform activities in their party programmes and spoke thus ;

Social reform is the basis for all progress.... It is social degradation that clogs the wheels of political progress Caste system has been the bane of the country. It must go root and branch.... Go forth into the country, educate the masses and preach to them our creed and ideals. Ours is really a democratic movement. Liberty....and equality shall be our watchwords in all spheres of activity, political, social, and economic. Social and political reform must go hand in hand.⁶⁹)

The social reform orientation of the Justice Party gained acceleration in the late twenties of this century, when leaders like E. V. Ramaswami Naicker involved themselves zealously in the activities of the party. (In fact "non-Brahminism acquired the makings of a social theory",⁶⁹ no sooner than did E. V. Ramaswami Naicker start his social reform movement under a bewitching phrase '*Suyamariyatal Iyakkam*' (Self-Respect movement) as a parallel organisation of the Justice Party championing the cause of the illiterate mass of the non-Brahmin communities.)

6. Communal Representation in the Councils and in Public Services

One of the professed goals of the Justice Party was to secure adequate communal representation of the non-Brahmins in the legislative council and in 'all branches of administration'. The leaders of the Justice Party found a precedent in the separate electorate granted to the Muslims under the Act of 1909. This was claimed by them as a shield against the preponderance of the Brahmins. The Non-Brahmin Manifesto had not failed to bring out this fact. They had genuine apprehension that the self-government without communal safeguards which the Montford Reforms

envisaged would result in Brahmin oligarchy. As it has been narrated already they made a lofty plea both before Montagu and the Joint Parliamentary committee on the necessity of granting communal representation to the non-Brahmins for atleast sometimes till the differences found among the various communities were wiped out. They made it clear to the British authorities that their principal plank was communal representation without which the non-Brahmins were not prepared to accept any reform.

The authorities at London were also convinced that something should be done to secure to the non-brahmins 'a fair share' in the legislature. Hence, the provision for reservation of seats for the non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council in the Government of India Act of 1919. It may be recalled that the disagreement with regard to the number of seats to be reserved led to the appointment of Lord Meston as an arbitrator whose famous award gave 28 seats for the non-Brahmins, (3 urban seats and 25 rural areas, all in plural member constituencies). This in fact facilitated the non-Brahmins to obtain a comfortable majority in the newly constituted Council under the Reform Act of 1919.

It has been elaborately dealt with in the subsequent chapter how Justice Party started fighting against the monopoly of the Brahmins immediately after taking the reins of administration in 1921. The two communal G.O.s, passed on 16th September 1921 and on 15th August 1922 respectively, due to the efforts of the Justice Party gave the non-Brahmins much opportunities to enter into public services. It was in fact that these G.O.s set the trend for the downtrodden underdogs to demand more concessions from the government so as to achieve social equality.

7. Free and Compulsory Elementary Education

It was one of the basic principles of the Justice Party ever since its inauguration that elementary education must be made free and compulsory. A demand for it had been made in the original Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916. Subsequently resolutions repeating the same demand were passed. The Coimbatore conference held on 19th August 1917 passed the following resolution.

This conference is of opinion that primary education is the first need of the country, that the efforts that have been made to diffuse education among the people are quite inadequate, and that government should give prominent place to any scheme that may be suggested for imparting free primary education to the people and making it compulsory in all Municipal areas.⁶⁴

(8) Abolition of Caste System and Elevation of Depressed Classes

P. Ramamurthy, former member of the Parliament of India and a veteran Communist leader, in his book, *The Freedom Struggle and Dravidian Movement* came out with a violent and unfair criticism against Justice Party that it "was never really concerned with social reforms or weakening of the caste system".⁶⁵ His views are not only partisan but biased.

The Justice Party was the earliest political party in modern India to condemn *Varnashrama Dharma*, and its concomitant evils; it avowedly stood for the abolition of caste. It considered caste as a baneful sin of the humanity. (In all its political conferences and confederations it laid stress on the need of enacting social legislation to establish an egalitarian society and to elevate the Depressed classes.) It is incorrect to assume that the Justice Party neglected the welfare of the Depressed class people. Right from the beginning it manifested itself as a doughty champion of their cause. The resolution passed at the Fourth Non-Brahmin Confederation held at Madras on 8th January 1921 on social reform and legislation bears eloquent testimony to their unflinching interest in the welfare of the *Panchamas*.

This confederation looks upon the Depressed classes as an integral part of the non-Brahmin Community for social as well as for political purposes, and regards it as the prime duty of non-Brahmins to treat them with perfect equality and to accord them every opportunity and facility for rising in the social, economic and political scale.⁶⁶

In the same confederation it was very much emphasised that in the interests of the Non-Brahmin movement it was necessary that non-Brahmin classes should abjure caste and other Brahminical institutions. As the first step towards achieving this goal, the leaders of the Justice Party urged the non-Brahmins to promote inter-caste marriages among the different sections of their communities.⁶⁷

(The participants of the confederation professed great interest in the welfare of the Adi-Dravidas. They wanted everything possible should be done "by the non-Brahmins of this Presidency for the uplift of the Depressed classes and urged upon the government" to initiate a more vigorous policy towards improving their conditions by giving more liberal facilities for education such as total exemption from fees, granting of scholarships and starting of free hostels. The confederation further urged the government on "the necessity for securing adequate representation of their interests not only in the councils and local bodies but in all branches of public services". It is necessary to mention here that the elevation of Depressed class people was one of the pet programmes of the Justice Party, about which the Congress began to talk only after the advent of Gandhi in the Indian political scene.)

(9) Promotion of Dravidian Languages

The University of Madras abolished the study of vernacular languages as per the new regulations which came into force in 1911-12. Languages such as Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian and Arabic were given importance and taught both at B.A. and B.A. Honours levels but the Dravidian languages were completely omitted from the curricula. Many were openly making a demand in the Senate of the University for the re-introduction of vernaculars as part of the curricula. The University which was stubborn and unyielding resolved to maintain the status quo, stating that it was "unnecessary and undesirable to recast the existing general scheme of courses."⁶⁸ It created a storm of protests from the public and the political parties. The Justice Party which stood for the cause of the vernaculars from its formation, did not fail to deprecate what the Senate of the Madras University

had done with regard to vernaculars. T. C. Thangavelu Pillai moved a resolution in the Fourth Non-Brahmin Confederation expressing grave concern over the unfair treatment meted out to the Dravidian languages in the University. The resolution ran as follows :

(That this confederation urges on the authorities concerned that the Dravidian languages should be placed on a footing of equality with languages like Sanskrit and Arabic, in order that the official careers like the Indian Civil Service, now open only to students of certain languages conventionally called classical, may be available for students of Dravidian languages as well.⁶⁹)

It is apparent from the above resolution that the Justice Party was very much interested in promoting the interests of the Dravidian languages and elevating them to the level of Sanskrit. This resolution dispels another misconception that the leaders of the Justice Party were strong advocates of English language. It should be admitted that the elite of the Party used that language to a great extent and even the proceedings of the conferences and meetings were all in English. They adopted resolutions in the same language. Their aim was to convey much about their programmes to the ruling English race and the English knowing officials rather than to the public for whose welfare they had been fighting all along. Therefore it cannot be said that the Justice Party neglected the native languages in preference to English. It was adopted more as the official language of India than as the language of the ruling race.

(10) Provincial Autonomy

As has been explained already, the Justice Party accepted the Reforms of 1919 with the fond hope that "England might yet be induced to grant further and wider reforms and the day might not be far off when India would be placed on a par with the self-governing dominions beyond the seas".¹⁰ Hence its enthusiastic co-operation with the authorities of the Government of Madras in working the system of diarchy. But the leaders of the Justice Party soon realised that "the system was bound to fail because

it was hemmed in by so many restrictions, circumscribed by so many conditions and narrowed down by so many limitations". It was a deliberate mockery that these leaders, who were the staunchest advocates of the Reforms in 1919, became its loudest critics in 1924 when the Muddiman committee came to India to assess its progress. K. V. Reddi Naidu, Minister of Industries under the Rajah of Panagal stated the limitations of diarchy when he appeared before that committee.

I was a Minister for Development without the forests. I was a Minister of Agriculture minus irrigation. As Minister of Agriculture, I had nothing to do with the administration of the Madras Agriculturists Loans Act or the Madras Land Improvement Loans Act....The efficacy and efficiency of a Minister of Agriculture without having anything to do with irrigation, agricultural loans, land improvement loans and famine relief, may better be imagined than described. Then again, I was Minister for Industries without factories, boilers, electricity and water power, mines or labour, all of which are reserved subjects.⁷¹

It is miserable that the diarchic constitution which was intended to train the Indians in the art of self-government, divided the functions of the government in such an illogical way as not to give the Ministers in charge of transferred departments 'autonomy within their own sphere.'⁷² The remedy for all the ills of the diarchy was, in the opinion of the Justices, the granting of full provincial autonomy with full responsible government to the provinces. The same view was emphasised even in the memorandum submitted by the S.I.L.F. to the Simon Commission in 1929. The memorandum states :

The present system of diarchy in the provinces cannot be worked much longer and must give place to some better and less rickety constitution.... The only alternative to the present system is taking a bold step forward and granting full responsible government in the provinces.⁷³

Several schemes were thus in the stock of the Justice Party. Because of the hybrid and unworkable nature of diarchy, it was not able to implement what all it programmed to do. However with extraordinary tenacity of purpose and aim, the leaders of the Justice Party successfully overcame the constraints and restrictions by influencing the 'Reserved half' and did commendable service by translating some of its principles into realities for the amelioration of the non-Brahmin folks of South India.

CHAPTER IV

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CHAPTER V

History of the Justice Party

From 1920 to 1937

The Nature and the Scope of Diarchy

The introduction of Montford Reforms marks a significant landmark in the constitutional history of India. Diarchy, the essence of the Reforms, as a system of administration was put into force in the provinces in 1920. It meant the introduction of partial 'Responsible Government' in the provinces on the basis of a division of functions into 'Transferred' and 'Reserved' halves. The administration of the reserved half was entrusted to the members of the executive council, appointed by the governor for a period of five years. But they were not responsible to the provincial legislature. The ministers who were nominated by the governor from among the elected members of the provincial council were in charge of the administration of the transferred half.¹ The important subjects that were 'reserved' for the administration of the governor and his executive council were Revenue, Law and Order and Finance. The transferred half consists of mainly local self-government, medical administration, public health and sanitation, education, public works, agriculture exclusive of irrigation, co-operative societies, religious and charitable endowments and development of industries.² The

whole purpose of the division of powers was to enforce the principle of ministerial responsibility to the legislature with regard to the administration of the transferred departments. It meant the removal of ministers by the vote of popular representatives whose confidence the ministers were supposed to possess. It also implied that the ministers had absolute control over his department so that he would be able to defend the proposals emanating from the policy pursued by and the action taken under that department.³

Although in theory they were to be responsible to legislature in practice, they remained under the absolute control of the governor inasmuch as they were to hold office during the latter's pleasure. However he could not act as an irresponsible and arbitrary executive head because the main purpose of the Act of 1919 was to make him a constitutional governor. In fact his job was really tough as he had to serve as moderator between the two wings of the government whenever disagreement arose among the executive councillors and the elected ministers. This intention of the Act was altogether forgotten after two years of its implementation. The governor claimed and exercised more rights than he ever possessed. This was one of the serious anomalies in the Act of 1919. None the less it is to be admitted, "with the advent of the new reforms provinces acquired a new political consciousness. The comparative freedom enjoyed by their legislatures helped them to build up a parliamentary tradition. . . . The legislatures displayed a broader vision in dealing with social, economic and welfare problems."⁴

The First General Elections and the Justice Party

The first general elections for the new council to be constituted as per the Montford Reforms were held at the end of November 1920. As stated earlier, the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi launched a non-violent non-co-operation movement and carried on a vigorous propaganda for the boycott of elections. It failed to evoke general enthusiasm in any considerable section of the people and in fact it found very little favour in the Presidency of Madras.⁵

Having decided to loyally accept the Reforms despite its serious handicaps and shortcomings, the Justice Party enthusiastically carried on its election campaign and won a tremendous victory. It captured 63 seats out of 98. Among the nominated members it claimed 18 as its supporters. In a chamber of 127 members the Justice Party had a strength of 81. The official review of the Government of India published in *India* in 1921-22 speaks of its significance :

For the first time in the history of India, the lower castes of Madras have asserted themselves against the intellectual oligarchy of the upper, and have seized political power in their own hands.... The first bulwark of caste dominance in political matters has been stormed as a result of the recent constitutional changes.⁶

The victory of the Justice Party was not a bolt from the blue. It was due to the following factors :

- (1) The boycott of election by the Congress left the field to the Justice Party without a formidable rival.
- (2) The non-Brahmin leaders campaigned vigorously. K. V. Reddi Naidu, for instance, addressed many election meetings in the southern districts. At the Tanjore District Non-Brahmin Conference held at Nagapatam on the 9th and 10th October 1920, he spoke with prophetic vision :

The coming elections afford one great opportunity for us to be rid of that (Brahmin) tyranny and to become once more free citizens. The fortunes of our party and of the great non-Brahmin community will, for a long time, largely depend upon the results of these elections and the extent to which we avail ourselves of this opportunity.... If the Brahmins come into power they will consolidate it and work it out to our further disadvantage. It is a case of now or never. If we are not returned to the legislative council in large numbers, we

lose the opportunity. The hand on the dial of our progress will be set back by at least two decades. The work of the last three years would go all in vain. Therefore, my friends, go to the country, educate the voter and impress upon him the value of the vote. The non-Brahmin voters form an overwhelming majority and the secrecy of the ballot will protect them from the sinister influence of the official, the vakil and the priest.⁷

- (3) Similarly P. Theagaraya Chetti, the accredited leader of the party, took herculean efforts to lead his party to power.
- (4) The reservation of seats to the non-Brahmin Hindus served as a lever to secure for them something like a decent representation in the local Legislative Council.⁸

The Formation of the First Ministry

In accordance with parliamentary practice and procedure, Lord Willingdon, the Governor, invited P. Theagaraya Chetti, the leader of the majority party, to form the ministry. But he persuaded one of his colleagues to take up the office.⁹ It was only on his advice the ministers for transferred half, were chosen.¹⁰

1. A. Subbarayalu Reddiyar, an advocate and a fellow student of P. Theagaraya Chetti at the Presidency College was appointed the First Minister of the cabinet and was assigned the portfolios of Education, Public Works, Excise and Registration.

2. P. Ramarayaningar, a Velama zamindar of Kalahasti, an M.A. in Sanskrit, a product of Presidency College, Madras, and a former member of the Imperial Legislative Council, was put in charge of Local Self-Government and Public Health.

3. K. V. Reddi Naidu, an advocate and a former student of Madras Christian College was made the Minister of Development.

The new ministry assumed office on 17th December 1920. Subsequently the following were appointed as Council Secretaries with a monthly salary of Rs. 500/- and their appointment was announced in the Council on 14th February 1921.

1. Edwin Periyamayakam
2. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar
3. P. Subbaroyan

Within a short period A. Subbarayulu Reddiar resigned his Chief Ministership since his health declined. In his place A. P. Patro, a lawyer from Berhampore was inducted. He took over the portfolio of Education. P. Ramarayaningar was elevated to the office of Chief Minister and he retained the portfolio of Local Self-Government.¹¹


Though Willingdon had a ministry solely made up of non-Brahmins, he chose Brahmins for several other key positions. For instance, he nominated P. Rajagopalachari, a Brahmin, as the President of the Legislative Council, which had a non-Brahmin majority. K. Srinivasa Iyengar was made a member of his Executive Council. Khan Bahadur Habibullah Khan, a prominent Muslim, was appointed the second Indian member. He gave the post of the Advocate-General to C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, a well-known Home Ruler. Leaders of the Justice Party thought that Lord Willingdon had chosen those Brahmins in order to keep the non-Brahmin ministers at bay.

The Formation of the Second Ministry

The first Legislative Council was dissolved with effect from 11th September 1923 after the expiry of its term. The ministers resigned their offices. The second general elections to the Madras Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly were held on 31st October 1923.¹² Owing to heavy rains and consequent floods in certain areas the polling could not be completed until 10th November 1923. Twenty candidates were elected unopposed for seventeen constituencies of the Legislative Council. All the ministers, the Rajah of Panagal, K. V. Reddi Naidu and A. P. Patro had been declared elected. Of the 98 elected candidates 61 were non-Brahmins, 13 Brahmins, 13 Muhammadans, 5 Indian Christians, 5 Europeans and 1 Anglo-Indian. However, the party suffered from internal feuds. It was by no means coherent as in the previous council. Though the Justice Party was in a position

to form the ministry, its strength had got reduced considerably. Its poor performance in the elections was due to various reasons.

1. The internal dissension began to corrode the vitals of the party. A substantial body of the followers of the party were not satisfied with the way in which things were being done. Leaders such as O. Kandaswamy Chetti, M. C. Rajah and Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar who had "done a lot for the Non-Brahmin movement when it was not in good circumstances and who bore the brunt of all opposition and abuse" became critical of the party's performance.¹³

 2. The exclusion of the Tamils from the first Ministry slackened the enthusiasm of the party workers in the southern districts. The first Justice Party ministry was described as an 'Andhra Non-Brahmin Hindu Ministry'. The leaders of the Justice Party did not fail to take cognisance of the fact. Within a short while, three non-Telugus (E. Periyannayagam, an Indian Christian, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, and Dr. P. Subbaroyan) were appointed the council secretaries. However, the Telugu-Tamil rivalry was well manifested when a conference of the Tamil representatives of the Justice Party was convened at Trichinopoly in August 1923. P. Theagaraya Chetti and all ministers participated in that conference. Pethachi Chettiyar was the chairman of the Reception committee and the Rajah of Ramnad was the President of the conference. In their speeches both strongly advocated the inclusion of one or more Tamilians in the next ministry. Eventually a resolution was adopted demanding proper representation of the Tamils in the ministry. P. Theagaraya Chetti made a statement approving the resolution.¹⁴

3. The members of the Congress were set at liberty "to stand as candidates and to exercise the right of voting at the forthcoming elections" by a resolution of the Congress in Delhi on 7th September 1922.¹⁵ The Swaraj Party which aimed at wrecking the constitution decided to contest the elections and accept office. Therefore, it carried on a forceful propaganda against

the Justice Party. However, its gain in 1923 elections was not in any way impressive. But it still affected the fortunes of the Justice Party.

4. Lack of effective propaganda was one of the reasons for the reduced strength of the Justice Party.

Nevertheless the Justice Party succeeded in getting 17 of its men as additional members to the council. With their help, it stabilised its position and endeavoured to implement its own schemes and programmes. The second Justice Party ministry was constituted on 19th November 1923 under the leadership of the Rajah of Panagal who retained A. P. Patro as his colleague but dropped K. V. Reddi Naidu in preference to T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai, a Tamil Vellala from Tuticorin, and a retired Deputy Collector. The following were appointed the Council Secretaries in March 1924 :

1. Abdullah Ghatala Sahib Bahadur (a Muslim)
2. S. Arpudaswami Udayar (a Christian), and
3. T. C. Thangavelu Pillai

This composition of the ministry was obviously an arrangement to satisfy different linguistic and religious groups. Motives were attributed to the induction of T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai into the ministry of Justice Party. His nomination as minister was the reason which made Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, O. T. Chetti and other second line of leaders feel aggrieved and drove them to the opposite camp.¹⁶

The No-Confidence Motion

The formation of the second ministry of the Justice Party left so many aspirants to the office of the ministership disgruntled who formed a splinter group under the leadership of C. R. Reddy. This cluster of men styled themselves as Democrats and organised the United Nationalist party.¹⁷ They decided to bring about a no-confidence motion against the newly constituted ministry. "They sought allies from all quarters and paid no attention to their non-Brahmin banner."¹⁸ It was clear that the independents

who did not belong to any party, the Swarajists, the Moderates and the Khilafatists would join hands with them.¹⁹ It was believed that C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and P. Rajagopalachari, the President of the Legislative Council were the brains behind this no-confidence motion and the non-Brahmin leaders of the dissident group became victims of the political machinations of the Brahmin leaders. The Chief Minister, the Rajah of Panagal was a past master in the art of politics. He was ably assisted by his colleague, A. P. Patro, in stemming the tide of the no-confidence motion, moved by C. R. Reddy against his ministry on 27th November 1923. The motion ran as follows :

That a humble and dutiful address be presented to His Excellency the Governor submitting that the ministry as now constituted by him, is against the weight of the verdict given by the country in the general election and does not possess the confidence of this House.²⁰

It was for the first time that such a motion of no-confidence was moved anywhere in India. In the debate, there was a marvellous display of eloquence and oratory. C. R. Reddy was almost Churchillian in his perfect-phrasing and his sarcasm was lethal. He based his no-confidence motion mainly upon two suppositions :

- (1) The verdict of the electorates in the recent elections to the Madras Legislative Council was against the ministry and
- (2) The Chief Minister appointed his own "staunch adherents" as Presidents of the District Boards and members of Local Boards. In short, he adopted "the spoil system" to favour his camp-followers.

For these charges the Rajah of Panagal categorically replied : "So far as the first is concerned, it has been repeatedly pointed out by speaker after speaker on this side of the House that the Hon. Mover's estimate of ministerial strength is erroneous. If the Ministerialists are not in such overwhelming majority as they were in the last council, they have still a workable majority. There

is no justification for the assumption that the verdict of the electorates is against the ministry. As regards the second assumption, it is more serious. It is as gratuitous as it seems to be more or less based on personal prejudice. It is based on incorrect observations, observations made in reckless ignorance or with deliberate intent to prejudice the ministerial administration. ”²¹

The debate in the council over the no-confidence motion created unusual public interest. “The discussion occupied two full days and though distinguished by some eloquent speeches, was marked by the fact that those who spoke in support of the motion had little or no constructive criticism. ”²²

The motion of no-confidence was eventually defeated by 65 votes to 44. The Reddy group which consisted of elected members of the Swaraj, Independent and anti-Ministerialist parties and all the non-official Muslim members, voted in favour of the motion *en bloc*. Of the 65 who voted against the motion, 44 were elected members, 13 were nominated non-official members and 8 were ex-officio and nominated official members. Ten members remained neutral of whom K. V. Reddi Naidu was one. If the non-official and nominated members had not voted against the motion, the position of the Justice Party would have been precarious. Excluding them the Ministerial party had a bare majority of one. The acrimonious discussion that took place in the council reflected the conflicts of personal nature and also disclosed that the great non-Brahmin party due to internal dissension tended to move towards its nadir.

The Justice Party Lost its Leading Light

P. Theagaraya Chetti, the leading light of the Justice Party, died on Tuesday, 28th April 1925. In his demise, the Justice Party sustained an irreparable loss. He was the one who brought together people of all shades of opinion into one fold. An astute politician and an able organiser, he was the acknowledged leader of the party after Dr. Nair. The success of the Justice Party in 1920 and 1923 elections was solely due to his guidance. His selfless service, sterling character and scrupulous honesty were

responsible for his leading position in the party. But it was felt by many that "his overbearing way of putting down any man who seemed to be challenging his authority had kept new leaders from developing."²³ It is true that there was no capable leader after his death to meet the challenge of the Swarajists.

The leadership of the Justice Party after the death of P. Theagaraya Chetti, however, devolved on the Rajah of Panagal, the then Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency. The no-confidence motion of C. R. Reddy, which he faced boldly created the necessity of setting the house of the Justice Party in order. From then on, he strove hard to bring some of the old guards like Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar back to the party. His efforts at rejuvenating the Justice Party did not prove a complete success. Unfortunately it appeared like "a flock of startled sheep each running in a different direction."²⁴ However, his leadership at least slowed down its decline.

The General Elections of 1926

The general elections which were due in November 1926, increased the tempo of the activities of the political parties in Madras Presidency. They directed their programmes primarily towards winning the elections. The Swarajists with redoubled vigour renewed their activities to capture the legislature. Equally the Justice Party consolidated its force with a determination to win the elections. The former dissidents of the party were wooed by the offer of positions in the party organisation as well as the Corporation of Madras.

The succession of George J. Goschen to the gubernatorial position of Madras Presidency after Willingdon destroyed the ecstasy of the 'Happy family'²⁵ which soon was "riven with internal feuds as individual ministers, Indian and I.C.S. members of the Executive Council fought over the rather small stock of power and patronage."²⁶ C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Law

member of the Executive Council, an arch-enemy of the Non-Brahmin movement and a clever and astute politician of those days had not hesitated to exploit the ignorance of the new Governor of the affairs of Madras.

The Justice Party despite its experience in electioneering, proved matchless to the Congress. The leaders of the party were robustly optimistic that they would be returned to power again. The Swarajists adopted superior tactics of propaganda. They organised public demonstrations, meetings, and door-to-door canvassing, including *bhajana* processions similar to those conducted by the Congress in the non-co-operation campaign of 1921. This method of electioneering brought "politics down from the Gokhale Hall to the beach, from the club to the street corner."⁸⁷ But the Justice Party adopted the traditional method of contacting the big-shots in villages and towns and influencing them.

Even for the Congress, the elections of 1926 was not an easy walk-over. Though the campaign was ably organised by a seasoned politician, Srinivasa Iyengar, it was difficult for the Swarajists to withstand the communal attacks of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. At the Conjeevaram conference of the Congress Party, held in 1925, much attention was focussed on the Gurukulam controversy which brought communalism to the forefront of nationalistic politics. E. V. Ramaswami Naicker openly canvassed for the non-Brahmin candidates and used his Tamil paper, *Kudi Arasu* for virulent attacks against Brahmins. His consequent expulsion from the Congress Party increased the intensity of communal propaganda. The Congress leaders were not unaware of the growing sentiments of non-Brahminism within the Congress. The delegates of the Conjeevaram conference requested that in the ensuing elections, at least half of the candidates should be non-Brahmins. Srinivasa Iyengar, being a shrewd politician, readily obliged to carry out this suggestion and allotted legislative council seats mostly to non-Brahmins in Tamil area.

The election to the Imperial Assembly and to the Legislative Council took place on 8th November 1926. The Congress secured

41 out of 98 seats and emerged as the largest party in the Madras Legislative Council. It captured all the four seats in the city of Madras which was supposed to be the stronghold of the Justicites who had recently captured the Corporation from the Swarajists. The Independents secured 36 seats and the strength of the Justicites was reduced to 21 which was almost half the strength in the previous council.⁸⁸ Though the Congress appeared as the largest party on the floor of the Madras Legislative Council with 41 seats, it did not have an absolute majority to form the ministry. The set-back of Justice Party was glaring. Many of its stalwarts such as O. Thanickachalam Chetti, Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar, K. V. Reddi Naidu and A. Ramaswami Mudaliar faced failures. However Panagal was returned with a very narrow majority. It was clear that no party was in a position to constitute a ministry of its own without the support of the other. Since the Governor's strong and settled dislike towards the Justice Party was openly made known, many of them wanted to be neutral till the formation of the new ministry. The election results which were nebulous, allowed "an ambitious governor free to dictate the balance of power in the legislature."⁸⁹

The Justice Party as a Responsible Opposition

Goschen invited C. V. S. Narasimha Raju, the leader of the Swaraj Party to explore the possibility of forming a ministry. In view of the fact that the Indian National Congress decided to accept office and to obstruct the operation of diarchy, he declined the offer. As an alternative, the Governor turned towards the Justicites, and the Independents. However, his definite conviction that the recent election had sufficiently demonstrated a clear rejection by the electorate of the policy of the Justice ministry rather forced him to emphasise that the former ministers should not be appointed even in a coalition ministry. This broke the negotiations with the Justicites.⁹⁰ Besides, the Rajah of Panagal detested the idea of forming the ministry in the name of the Justice Party solely because it would be impossible to retain office utterly disregarding the majority of the Swaraj Party. *Justice* wrote on 9th March 1927 :

The Justice Party is not desirous of accepting office in the present Legislative Council with its present strength. We are constitutionalists pledged to a policy of reforming the administration through constitutional means and refusing to adopt mere obstructive tactics.⁸¹

It appeared so plainly that the days of Panagal were over and for the first time after the introduction of diarchy, the Justice Party was obliged to play the role of the opposition. The thirty-seven year-old Kongu Vellala barrister and a zamindar, Dr. Subbaroyan was chosen by Goschen to head the ministry. A. Ranganatha Mudaliar, a retired Deputy Collector of Bellary and R. N. Arogyasamy Mudaliar, a Roman Catholic and ex-engineer of Public Works Department were appointed the second and the third ministers.

The constitution of the ministry under the leadership of Dr. Subbaroyan soon became an object of sour to the Justicites. Its minority character and the unqualified support that the governor gave it by nominating 34 members to the council with apparent instructions to vote always on the side of the ministry not only revealed the pretensions of diarchy but also proved that it was "a case of government by proxy."⁸²

The attitude of the Justice Party towards the lame-duck ministry of Dr. Subbaroyan was, at the beginning, terribly hostile. It desired to uphold the democratic tradition that had been ushered in the council after the introduction of the diarchy by playing the role of a responsible opposition. In the initial period of the council it was very anxious to expose the weakness of the ministry. Therefore in March 1927, at the second session of the council, B. Muniswami Naidu, a Justice Party leader (the future Chief Minister of the Justice Party) moved two cut motions on the ministers' salaries, which almost amounted to a 'no-confidence' motion against the ministry. The cut motion was defeated by as many as 41 votes. Despite the initial confrontation between the Justicites and the Swarajists in the council, they came closer in the subsequent months in order to fight a common battle against the Independent Ministry.

Accordingly, Swami Venkatachalam Chetti, a Swarajist, moved a motion in the legislative council on 23rd August 1927, the opening day of the session, expressing want of confidence in the ministry.³³ The motion came up for discussion at 2-30 p.m., the same day. The leader of the Swarajists explained why that vote of no-confidence was moved. Since his party did not accept the very principle of diarchy from the beginning and did resist the system at present it had decided to mar it. He proceeded further and said that the success of his party in the 1926 elections indicated that the people had lost their faith in the existing constitutional system.

Similarly, B. Ramachandra Reddi, a notable Justice Party member wanted the ministry to quit the office. Following him, M. Krishnan Nair, another leading Justicite, launched a severe criticism against the ministry which in his opinion was noted for its improbity and corruption. Further he remarked that it was morally wrong on the part of the ministers to remain in office after having been defeated thrice by the opposition in a short period.

Neither the virulent attack of the Swarajists nor the scathing criticism of the Justicites had shaken the position of the ministry. It was as strong as ever because it enjoyed the solid support of the nominated members and the firm backing of the Governor. The motion was defeated by the House without any effort. The ministry survived by securing 67 votes and the opposition 56.

The Simon Commission and the Justice Party

The appointment of a statutory commission under the chairmanship of John Simon on 8th November 1927 denotes another stage of constitutional development in the history of modern India. The Act of 1919 had provided that at the expiration of ten years from the introduction of Montford Reforms, a royal commission should be sent out to India in order to report to Parliament regarding their progress and effects and hence the appointment of the Simon Commission.³⁴

The constitution of the statutory commission became the main theme of political discussion in Madras. The Congress decided to boycott the commission on the plea that there was no Indian among its members. Though the leading Justices like K. V. Reddi Naidu and Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar were against the boycott move of the Congress,³⁵ the progressive elements in the Justice party supported it.³⁶ The controversy as to the boycott of the Simon Commission gained entry into the legislative council. G. Hari Sarvothama Rao, a leading member of the Swaraj party, moved a resolution in the council opposing any co-operation by the legislature with the commission in its existing form. He pleaded for the immediate abolition of the commission and the convening of a Round Table Conference consisting of elected representatives of all the legislatures of India for the purpose of drafting the new constitution.³⁷ Making a request to Great Britain to concede the rights of self-determination to India, he stated "until this right is conceded, until the Constituent Assembly in India is allowed to make its own constitution for the country my party at any rate is bound not to co-operate with this commission."³⁸ The resolution was put to the vote and carried with 61 members favouring and 12 remaining neutral. The Justice Party also voted for this resolution despite the fact that none of its members spoke on this occasion. Dr. Subbaroyan, the Chief Minister, who thought that it would be worthwhile to co-operate with the Simon Commission voted against the resolution whereas his colleagues A. Ranganatha Mudaliar and Arogyaswami Mudaliar shared the view of the majority that the commission must be boycotted. There arose a constitutional crisis, as a split had occurred in the ministry on the question of boycotting the Simon Commission. It appears that Dr. Subbaroyan submitted his resignation, but forced his colleagues A. Ranganatha Mudaliar and Arogyaswami Mudaliar to resign their ministership as they voted in favour of the boycott resolution on 25th January. As the governor realised the imminent danger of joining together of the Congress and the Justice Parties to oust Dr. Subbaroyan from power, he wanted to win back the confidence of the Rajah of Panagal. To please Justices he appointed M. Krishnan Nair, a Justice from Malabar, as the new Law Member. The entire

reshuffling of the ministry with the inclusion of S. Muthiah Mudaliar and M. R. Sethuratnam Aiyar, it is believed, was the outcome of the political ingenuity of the Rajah of Panagal. It was only because of the drive that the Rajah of Panagal gave, both S. Muthiah Mudaliar and M. R. Sethuratnam Aiyar defected from the Swarajist camp.

The repaired and rebuilt ministerial boat of Dr. Subbaroyan was free from the rough weather. Its real saviour was neither Goschen nor Dr. Subbaroyan but the Rajah of Panagal. "From the low ebb of the 1926 elections and the shoals of the Coimbatore conference, Panagal had rescued his party,"³⁹ and re-established his supremacy in the politics of Madras Presidency. He was powerful enough to get the procedure of the Simon Commission altered in order to change the attitude of his party towards it. To quote C. J. Baker, "In the nine months between this reshuffle (of ministry) and his death, Panagal reputedly enjoyed more power and influence in government circles than he had done even while chief minister."⁴⁰ With the ascendancy of Panagal, the power and influence of the Swarajists declined.

The Preliminary Visit of the Simon Commission to Madras

The attitude of the Justice Party towards the Simon Commission changed slowly but perceptibly. The opinion of the Rajah of Panagal, the leader of the party, began to be favourable to the idea of co-operation with the commission, perhaps due to his proximity to the governor as ministry-maker.

To co-operate with the Simon Commission a committee consisting of seven members of the legislative council was formed under the chairmanship of A. P. Patro. It included S. Kumaraswami Reddiar, the Kumararaja of Venkatagiri, P. Khaliff-ullah, Daniel Thomas, P. Siva Rao and Siva Raj.⁴¹ The committee proposed certain changes, the most important of which was the grant of provincial autonomy. The majority of the committee wanted "a declaration by the British Government that full dominion status was the goal of India."⁴² In an atmosphere of great excitement, the statutory commission headed by John Simon came

to India in February 1928 to undertake a preliminary survey of the Indian problems. It visited almost all big cities. It reached Madras on 28th February 1928. They were enthusiastically received by Lord and Lady Goschen, who appeared optimistic with regard to the situation prevailing in Madras. Representatives of many educational and charitable institutions met the commission. The president of the Madras Legislative Council invited the members of the commission to witness the proceedings. Subsequently, they were introduced to the members of the political parties including the Rajah of Panagal and A. P. Patro.

The Second Visit of the Commission

The Simon Commission arrived again in Madras on 18th February 1929. A fitting reception was accorded by the non-Congressites particularly the Justicites, who dramatically changed their attitude from vigorous opposition to active co-operation with the commission. Nearly 500 persons of both sexes who assembled in the compound of the harbour received the members of the commission with open arms. To express their resentment against the commission, the leading Congressmen organised a successful hartal on the day of its arrival. A meeting was conducted on the Marina in the evening and the leaders spoke with vehemence against the commission, which received deputations from various political and non-political organisations. Every deputation put forth its problems and expressed its views on the impending constitutional reforms. The memorandum of the S.I.L.F. was by and large significant. It was in the form of recommendations and suggestions. It expressed the considered opinion of the Justice Party on electorates, which needs a particular mention here :

The Federation is in favour of continuing the special and separate electorates existing at present. The Federation does not agree that all communal evils existing in the country at present are due either wholly or in a very large measure to the creation of separate electorates.¹³

In this connection it is appropriate to give the views of the Government of Madras on constitutional reforms. The memorandum which the Government of Madras submitted to the Simon Commission is in many respects a unique document. Its significance lies in its unequivocal condemnation of diarchy as a system of government. It recommended full provincial autonomy.

The Irreparable Calamity

The Justice Party though it regained its lost influence after the reshuffling of Dr. Subbarayan's ministry, suffered an irreparable loss in the premature demise of the Rajah of Panagal on 16th December 1928, the last of the trio of the Non-Brahmin movement which marked the end of the Justice Party for all practical purposes.⁴⁴

N. G. Ranga wrote to *Justice* on the demise of Panagal under the heading 'A Great Social Reformer'.

His name will go into Indian History as one of the greatest men who have striven hard to bring about justice in our social organisation. What he has achieved as Chief Minister of the Madras Government is unequalled by anything done by any other ministry in India in the past ten years. He has successfully grappled with a social evil which has defied the efforts of many a statesman in the past century. He found that huge amounts of money, contributed to the service of god and humanity, were being diverted to scarcely useful and respectable purposes and he took to his heart to stop this dangerous and inhuman practice. The Hindu Religious Endowments Act is his only child... he exhibited all his statesmanship, tenacity and socialistic fervour in making the Act an act both in theory and practice.... I am sure future historians will give more prominent place to this great reform achieved by the Rajah of Panagal.⁴⁵

The Hindu paid a rich tribute to the Rajah of Panagal :

Essentially a conservative by instinct and training, he showed remarkable ability to perceive the trend of the popular

upheaval in our province no less in social than in political matters and he showed consummate strategy and great ability in maintaining the influence and integrity of his party, when the mantle of leadership fell on him after the death of Sir P. Theagaraya Chetti a few years ago. In many respects he was a contrast to the other leader who was frank, outspoken and vehement in his life and conduct. The Rajah Saheb was, on the other hand, always reserved and restrained, tactful and polished to a degree and his courtesy and consideration to friends and opponents alike has always been marked.⁴⁶

The Justice Party Staged a Come-back to Power

Gandhi at the Lahore session in December 1929 demanded complete independence to our country. It aroused the enthusiasm of the nationalists who resolved to boycott the legislature as a preliminary step. Seventeen of the Swarajists of the Madras Legislative Council including S. Satyamurthy tendered their resignations. The decision taken at Lahore not to participate in the council was obviously unpalatable to some of the members of the Swaraj Party of Madras. Five Congress M.L.Cs declined to resign. But Swami Venkatachalam Chetti, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the legislative Council, and R. K. Shanmugham Chetti, a member of the assembly, were the first among the persons who resigned. Their subsequent unopposed re-election as independents apparently created an impression that they were the possible converts to the Justice Party.⁴⁷

The fortunes of the Congress was at the lowest ebb on the eve of the 1930 elections. The Tamil Nadu Congress committee did not participate in the elections to the legislative council in late 1930. The reason that some of its leaders such as C. N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, P. Varadarajulu Naidu and S. Satyamurthy adduced was that there was no adequate time to prepare for the elections. However, the T.N.C.C. did allow individuals to contest for election on their own. The electoral field was completely left to the Justice Party and the Ministerialists (Independents). In political outlook there was not much difference between these two parties

because both stood for constitutional progress and in principle both were opposed to the policy of the Congress. The Justice Party which was hobnobbing with the Ministerialists sometimes and quarelling with them at other times fielded forty-five candidates. The Ministerialists put up candidates for a majority of the seats. Many of them were prepared to support whichever party was successful. The results of the elections were very much in favour of the Justice Party. Some of its foremost members were returned unopposed, and they secured overwhelming majority in places like Vizagapatnam, Chingleput, West Godavary, Bellary, Trichinopoly and Tinnevely.⁴⁸ It was claimed that nearly 70 per cent of the total votes were cast in support of the Justice candidates. The Ministerialists were signally defeated at the polls. Since the Justice Party emerged victorious, the governor called upon B. Muniswami Naidu, the leader of the Justice Party, to form the ministry. He took up office on 27th October 1930 with P. T. Rajan and S. Kumaraswami Reddiar as his colleagues. The victory that the Justice Party won was mainly due to its reorganisation before the elections and the reorientation of its programmes.⁴⁹ In inviting B. Muniswami Naidu to form the ministry, the governor followed the healthy constitutional practice of calling up on the leader of the largest group in the legislature. *Madras Mail* wrote on 25th October : "Taken as a whole it is a promising ministry. Its leader is an earnest man and his colleagues combine zeal with knowledge." The new ministry had a lot of problems to tackle. Furthermore, they assumed the responsibility of office at a time when the southern districts were being devastated by floods. The new ministry had to undertake many ameliorative measures such as remission of land-tax and other reliefs. The civil disobedience campaign of the Congress also absorbed the attention of the ministry. Though Muniswami Naidu was capable of dealing with the problems of the state, he found himself miserable in the midst of faction in the party. The selection of his ministerial colleagues left the Telugu zamindars headed by the Rajah of Bobbili and the Kumararajah of Venkatagiri aggrieved. The Chief Minister appeared to them as anti-zamindari in outlook. Similarly M. A. Muthiah Chettiar, an influential leader of the Nattukottai Chetti

community, a business magnate and a banker who expected a ministerial post was also dissatisfied. The Telugu zamindars along with the Nattukottai Chettis organised a Justice 'Ginger group' in the legislature as early as November 1930 to show their displeasure at the non-inclusion of the zamindars. The dissensions in the Justice Party in the later half of the year 1932 hardened into a definite schism.

The Ascendancy of the Rajah of Bobbili

There was a threat of no-confidence motion against the ministry of Muniswami Naidu from the 'Ginger group' of the Party that saw in him 'a sneaking affection for the Congress and the Swarajists'. A dramatic turn of events took place. When his own ministerial colleagues, P.T. Rajan and S. Kumaraswami Reddiar tendered their resignations, Naidu, suspecting that a motion of no-confidence against him might succeed, resigned his Chiefministership, and it was promptly accepted by the governor. On 5th November 1932, the Rajah of Bobbili was appointed the Chief Minister. Even after this, the dry bickerings continued and tarnished the image of the party very much. Frantic efforts were made by the Rajah of Bobbili to rejuvenate the party but in vain.

The 1934 Assembly Election

The tenure of the legislative council which should have expired on 5th November 1933 in normal course was extended for another year in view of the impending constitutional changes and also due to the improbability of a new council under the diarchical constitution running its full course.⁵⁰ The general elections to the Central Legislative Assembly took place in November 1934 and it was conducted alone for the first time. In response to the decision of the A.I.C.C. meeting held at Patna in May 1934, the Congress abandoned civil disobedience. It was also for the first time that the Congress Party had decided to contest the elections under diarchy. So it organised a vigorous election campaign and won a landslide victory.

It was believed that the Justice Party was defeated "not so much by the strength of their opponents' campaigns as by the intrigues of their party colleagues."⁶¹ Its setback posed a challenge even to its very existence. The leaders began to respond to it immediately by convening a meeting of party enthusiasts at Branson Baugh, the residence of the Rajah of Bobbili in Mount Road, Madras, to take concerted effort to revitalize the already corroded Justice Party. To patch up the factionalism within the fold of the Justice Party, the Rajah inducted Muthiah Chettiar into his ministry when Kumaraswami Reddiar resigned his ministerial post due to his failing health in 1936.

The 1937 Elections

The Government of India Act 1935 provided for the establishment of full responsible government subject to 'safeguards' in the eleven provinces of British India. The first elections as per the Act of 1935 were to take place in February 1937.

Attracted by the recent success of the Congress party in the by-elections many joined the Congress camp. The prominent defectors were Dr. Subbaroyan, S. Ramanathan, a close associate of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, and K. Sitarama Reddi of Cuddalore. The triumph of 1934 made the political opportunists believe that it would be an easy walk-over for them in the ensuing elections if they contested as Congress candidates. A very impressive election campaign was organised by the Congress leaders. They deployed all their weapons—"the machinery of local government, the mediation of important vote-brokers, the energy of the volunteers, and the confidence that would in fact win."⁶²

But at the same time the Justice Party was steeped in 'supine indolence'. The opposition that it gave to the Congress was nominal. There was no regular organisation to carry on the election campaign. Many eminent party people abandoned the party before the polls and joined the Congress. Having lost the morale and confidence they left the field without giving stiff resistance to Congressmen to facilitate their success an easy one. The surging tide of nationalism was perhaps the reason for their

whittled enthusiasm. The results of the election were greatly disappointing to the Justicites. Even the Rajah of Bobbili, the leader of the Justice Party was defeated with a margin of 6,000 votes.⁵³ It startled the Congressmen themselves as it made the leading Justicites leave the political field lock, stock and barrel. The Congress won 159 seats out of 215. Besides the defeat of the leader of the party, his able lieutenants such as P. T. Rajan, the Kumararajah of Venkatagiri and A. P. Patro were all defeated. Thus internal dissension, ineffective organisation, inertia and lack of proper leadership took the Justice Party along the path of decline.

1. M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional History of India 1600-1950* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 59.
2. Keralaputra, *The Working of Dyarchy in India*, p. 19.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
4. Dr. A. Krishnaswami, *The Indian Union and the States, A Study in Autonomy and Integration*, (Oxford, 1964), p. 6.
5. RAMP, 1919-20, p. 7.
6. R. L. Hardgrave, Jr. *The Dravidian Movement*, p. 20.
7. G. V. Subba Rao, *Life and Times of Sir K. V. Reddi Naidu*, p. 76.
8. Law (Legislative) G. O. No. 280, 12 Nov. 1921.
9. A. P. Patro, "The Justice Movement in India", *Asiatic Review*, N.S. XXVIII (Jan. 1932), p. 44.
10. When a resolution was adopted in the legislative council, condoling the death of A. Subbarayulu Reddiar, P. Theagaraya Chetti spoke : " When at the time of the formation of the cabinet, His Excellency consulted me, the first name that came to my mind was the name of Diwan Bahadur A. Subbarayulu Reddiar.... I must say that when he was asked to take the ministership he was quite unwilling. It was I that forced him to accept it. " PMLC, Vol. IV (Dec. 1921 to Jan. 1922), p. 1653.
11. Public, G. O. No. 440, 11 July 1921.
12. RAMP, 1923-24, p. XX.
13. *The Hindu*, 2 June 1923.
14. *Fortnightly Report*, 1 Sept. 1923.
15. Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *A Hundred Years of the Hindu*, p. 297.
16. S. Muthuswamy Pillai, *History of Justice Party* (Tamil), (Madras, 1940), p. 78.
17. D. Anjaneyalu, Dr. C. R. Reddy (New Delhi, 1974) p. 16. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (ed.) *Essays and Addresses, C. R. Reddy* (Waltair, 1966), p. XII.
18. C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India*, p. 70.
19. *Andhra Patrika*, 20 Nov. 1923 (Madras NNR, 1923).
20. PMLC, Vol. XV (Nov.—Dec. 1923) p. 17. It is also cited in S. Gopala-krishnan, *Political Movements in South India, 1914-1929* (Madras 1981), p. 135.
21. PMLC, Vol. V (Nov.—Dec. 1923), p. 148.
22. *Fortnightly Report*, 5 Dec. 1923.
23. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 264.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
25. Willingdon described his cabinet as " Happy Family " See C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India*, p. 43.
26. *Ibid.*
27. E. F. Irschick quotes *Madras Mail*, 2 June 1925, in *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 312.

28. The official records show the strength of Independents as 22, Justicites 21, Congress 41 and the rest neutral. Law Department Legislative (Miscellaneous) G.O. No. 511 (Confidential), 1 Dec. 1926.
29. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*, p. 102.
30. D. J. Arnold, "Nationalism and Regional Politics : Tamil Nadu, India, 1920-1937", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sussex, 1973, p. 158.
31. A. R. Mudaliar, *The Mirror of the Year*, pp. 13-14.
32. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*, p. 104.
33. *Fortnightly Report*, 2 Sept. 1927.
34. S. R. Bakshi, *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism*, p. 17.
35. *Fortnightly Report*, 16 Nov. 1927.
36. D. J. Arnold, "Nationalism and Regional Politics in Tamil Nadu, India, 1920-1937" p. 165.
37. PMLC, Vol. XXXIX, (Jan. 1928), p. 193.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
39. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*, p. 110.
40. C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India*, p. 77.
41. S. R. Bakshi, *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 115-116.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
43. T. A. V. Nathan, (ed.) *Justice Year Book 1929*, Section III, p. 13.
44. E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 320.
45. *Justice*, 18 Dec. 1928.
46. Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *A Hundred Years of the Hindu*, p. 370.
47. *Fortnightly Report*, 18 Feb. 1930.
48. *Justice*, 8 Oct. 1930.
49. *The Hindu*, 25 Oct. 1930 (Madras NNR, 1930).
50. RAMP, 1932-33, pp. XIV-XV.
51. C. J. Baker, *The Politics of South India*, p. 242.
52. C. J. Baker, "The Congress at the 1937 elections in Madras", *Modern Asian Studies*, 1976, pp. 5789.
53. Nilkan Perumal, *Bobbili*, p. 12-78.

CHAPTER VI

The Performance of the Justice Party

Educational Sphere

Education, a vital subject was not wholly entrusted to the care of the elected ministers. European and Anglo-Indian education was a reserved subject. The authors of the constitution ostensibly avoided entrusting the education of those communities to the care of the Indian ministers.¹ Nevertheless the Central legislature possessed concurrent jurisdiction on all essential matters concerning the universities. But, education was one of the fields in which the work of the Justice Party brought in a great progress. During its regime education of all categories—elementary, secondary and collegiate—made rapid strides.

Free and Compulsory Education

Free and compulsory education was one of the avowed principles of the Justice Party ever since its inception. It was only in the city of Madras that free and compulsory education was introduced for the first time for boys and girls. A great impetus was given to the education of girls by making education free beyond eighth standard.² Gradually free and compulsory education was

introduced into several municipalities. By 1925 in nearly eighteen out of twenty municipalities it had been put into practice. Likewise in rural areas many elementary schools had been started. The Rajah of Panagal who presided over the second All-India Non-Brahmin Congress, held at Amraoti on 27th December 1925, reviewed the work of his party after coming to power. He said that "during the last five years in Madras, elementary education increased by leaps and bounds.... Before the end of next year it is expected that there will not be a single village with a total population of over 500 which will not have its own village school."³ A.P. Patro who held education portfolio during the first two ministries evinced a lot of interest in the promotion of both elementary and higher education. Only during his period education was "taken to the Door of the villager and habituate him to the necessity of literacy."

A Special Training Institute for Fisher Children

Special attention was paid to the education of fisher children by the Department of Fisheries, which maintained thirty seven fishing schools on the West Coast. Nearly 3,000 boys and 1,500 girls in these schools were offered free instruction of a special type bearing on the fishermen's calling. To provide trained teachers in fishery techniques a special training institute was established at Calicut. These schools, indeed, contributed much to the improvement of the material and moral welfare of the fisher folk.⁴

Midday Meals Scheme

P. Theagaraya Chetti, a good samaritan, gave a fillip to the cause of elementary education by introducing a humanitarian measure. Most of the children attending the corporation schools were half-starved. As early as 1920 the Corporation of Madras (with the approval of its council) provided breakfast to the pupils of corporation school at Thousand Lights at a cost not exceeding one anna per day per pupil.⁵ P. Theagaraya Chetti who was at that time the president of the corporation explained that the

reason for the exceptional treatment meted out to the pupils in the school was that they were poor and their poverty was the cause for the thin strength of the school. There were hardly 165 pupils in that school. Subsequently four more schools were brought under the scheme. The admission of students in those five schools demonstrated a 'dramatic improvement' from a combined strength of 811 in 1922-23 to 1,671 in 1924-25. The financial commitment of the corporation was heavy. Annually it had to spend Rs. 7,000/- Since this expenditure was met from the Elementary Education Fund the Government of Fort St. George questioned its validity and disallowed the expenditure which resulted in the suspension of the programme from 1st April 1925.⁶ The stoppage of this scheme led to a drop of almost 40 per cent of the students from schools. The enrolment in these five schools dropped heavily from 1,832 to 1,110 during the same year.

The Revival of the Programme

The suspension of midday meal scheme created a great uproar in the corporation council. Many councillors wanted the immediate resumption of this scheme. Therefore the council resolved to carry on the programme by meeting the cost from the general fund of the corporation. However, the programme was revived only in April 1927. Nearly 1,000 poor students in twenty-five schools derived its benefit. The enrolment in the five schools referred to earlier also rose.⁷ Thus the credit of introducing a welfare measure to provide succour to needy young pupils unmistakably goes to the Justice Party.⁸ It cannot be denied that the measure adopted by the Justice Party attracted the socially backward and poor children to school and paved the way for their uplift.

Despite the earnest efforts of the Justice Party in making compulsory education a popular scheme it did not make much headway. Hence the Government of Madras decided to reorganise and improve all stages and grades of education and it undertook a "comprehensive survey of the whole field of education and a rescrutiny of the reports presented by the special committees

appointed in the last few years as well as the very important report of the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission popularly known as the Hartog Committee."⁹ The structure of the educational system was thoroughly examined and some of the conclusions arrived at by the Government of Madras and their proposals were embodied in the Press communique No. 1398 dated 26th June 1937.¹⁰ An education committee of the Provincial Economic Advisory Council was constituted under the Chairmanship of the then Education Minister, S. Kumaraswami Reddiyar. It considered ways and means for the expansion of compulsory elementary education in all villages and towns with a population of 5,000 and more. It was of view that *if compulsion* was introduced into any area only boys between six and eight and girls between five and seven should be compelled to attend school and remain at school until the age of twelve in the case of boys and eleven in the case of girls or until they completed sixth standard.¹¹

Madras Elementary Education Amendment Act

The Government of Madras felt that a "large amount of money... spent by the government on elementary education ... went as a waste because the students lapsed into illiteracy in their later life." Therefore it contemplated a scheme to prevent the waste of public funds and "ensure that all moneys spent by the government in the cause of elementary education really tended to improve literacy." Hence the amendment of the Madras Elementary Education Act of 1920. Justice Party did amend this Act, twice, first in 1934 and then in 1935. The 1934 Amendment Act was specially meant to augment the source of Elementary Education Fund. But the Act, amended in 1935 was enacted with a view to eliminating wastage by making elementary education compulsory for boys and girls of certain age. In other words it introduced a modified form of compulsion by ensuring that the child entering the school could not be removed within the period of its school age. It also provided "for a penalty recoverable from the offending parent instead of his prosecution for failure to send the child to school."¹² There was a lot of

criticism against the method of compulsion contemplated in the Act. The critics were of opinion that "all endeavours to introduce compulsion must wait till schools had become greatly improved that they would attract students of their own accord without any coercion." Replying to the criticism the Minister for Education firmly stressed that compulsion was the only way and proper method of stopping wastage. But at the same time he agreed with the view that the poor children should be given some additional nourishment in schools. The minister while appealing to the members of the council to support this measure of amendment maintained : "Let us be the pioneers of introducing the system of compulsory education which is supported by such an authoritative body like the Royal Commission on Agriculture." The bill was then passed. It was a salutary measure which facilitated a rapid expansion of mass education. Taking into consideration the financial constraints that the popular ministry had to face for the simple reason that finance was a reserved subject, far-reaching changes envisaged could not be translated into action. Yet a large increase in enrolment of students in elementary schools indicated that the long indifference and disinterest of the masses was slowly fading away. What the Justice Party had done for the cause of elementary education was really noteworthy.

Education of Girls

The social customs such as early marriage, habit of stopping the girls after puberty and purdah system were the hurdles which "made difficult both the attendance of girls at schools and the provision of women teachers." However, a great impetus was given to girls' education during the time when the Justice Party was in power. A popular system of education at primary level was co-education. There was no opposition for this from any section of the people. It was estimated approximately that 3 lakhs of girls were studying in boys' schools.¹³ Madras was one of the states which introduced compulsory education for non-Muhammadian girls also. It was effectively implemented in all schools in the city of Madras. The municipality of Erode, despite its backwardness, was the earliest one to introduce compulsory

education for girls. An official report of the Madras Government stated that the authorities did not experience any difficulty in introducing compulsion for non-Muslim girls in any one of the places in which it was tried.¹⁴ Thus the education of girls received every encouragement and help during the regime of the Justice Party.

Education of the Depressed Classes

The Justice Party which had the uplift of Depressed classes as one of its objectives took special efforts in promoting their educational interests. The Labour Department with which the promotion of elementary education of the Depressed classes was entrusted, had grown in its size and scope under the rule of the Justice Party. It opened separate primary schools for the sake of the Depressed classes called 'Labour Schools'. When its activities multiplied, a good number of such schools sprang up. Between 1922 and 1927 the total number of these schools increased from 7,651 to 10,035.¹⁵ As a welfare measure, a considerable number of scholarships and stipends were granted for the students of these schools. Further they were admitted into all grades of institutions on payment of half fees, and permitted to appear for the School Leaving Certificate Examination without payment of examination fees.

In spite of the encouragement given by the government, caste prejudices which were strong in certain places hindered their educational progress. The government was forced to take stringent measures in order to implement its policy. (1) It insisted on the right of admission for all the Depressed class pupils into all public schools. (2) A warning was given to the management schools that grant-in-aid would be refused if they did not admit the pupils of the Depressed classes. (3) The government was keen that public schools should be situated in places accessible to them. Therefore the local bodies were warned that the grants given to them on behalf of schools under their management would be withdrawn if they were not within the reach of the students of the Depressed classes.¹⁶ Special efforts were also taken for starting hostels for them.

However, these measures were ineffective in the absence of a law prohibiting discriminatory practices. None the less, the statistics provided by the government showed that there was considerable progress in the enrolment of students of the Depressed classes in public schools. In the year 1926-27 nearly 38 per cent and in the year 1931-32 roughly 37 per cent of the government schools had students of those communities on rolls.

Though the Justice Party had taken various positive steps to improve the educational progress of the Depressed classes, it cannot be denied that there was no progress to the extent the government desired. Undoubtedly, the Justice Party was a pioneer in showing a genuine interest in the social and educational progress of the Depressed classes.

The Establishment of the School of Indian Medicine

The Rajah of Panagal desired to revive the *Siddha* system of medicine. He appointed a committee with Usman, as its secretary to make a thorough study of the problems relating to the system of Indian medicine. The outcome was the founding of the school of Indian medicine by the Rajah of Panagal. Under Usman's able guidance it made rapid strides.¹⁷ In fact great attention was paid to its development. Facilities were provided for extensive research in *Ayurveda*, *Siddha* and *Unani* systems.

The Madras University Act, 1923

The University of Madras, which was founded in 1857 by an Act of the Indian Legislative Council had a very "limited purpose to serve for its only function under the Act was to ascertain by means of an examination, the persons who had acquired proficiency in different branches of learning."¹⁸ It was only in 1904 the activities of the university were expanded by an enactment, wherein it was laid down that the purpose of the University was (a) to make provision for the instruction of students, (b) to appoint University Professors and Lecturers, (c) to hold and manage educational endowments, (d) to erect, equip and maintain University libraries, laboratories, and museums, (e) to make regulations relating to residence and conduct of students and (f) to do

all such other acts as are necessary for the promotion of study and research. In short the University till then remained solely as an examining body and it did not concern itself either with teaching or with the administration of colleges.

The Act of 1923 which the Justice Ministry brought forth, reorganised the University of Madras with a view to creating "a teaching and residential university in Madras with constituent arts and professional colleges within a radius of ten miles and with affiliated colleges scattered over the entire length and breadth of the Madras Presidency."¹⁹ The Act aimed at fostering the "development of academic life and corporate unity in colleges and in the university by promoting inter-collegiate co-operation and co-operation between the colleges and the university and also to prepare for the institution of new universities by the concentration and co-ordination of resources for higher teaching and research at suitable centres outside the limits of the university."²⁰

This Act changed rather thoroughly the composition of the Senate which was considered a 'Brahmanised body of the university'. Further it widened the membership of the Senate by giving representation to the various classes and interests as follows :

- (1) Twenty members to be elected by registered graduates ;
- (2) Ten members by the Academic Council ;
- (3) Six members by the Members of the Legislative Assembly ;
- (4) Three members by the Members of the Legislative Council ;
- (5) Three members by the Principals of approved colleges ;
- (6) One member by the Headmasters of high schools from the group of revenue districts mentioned below :
 (a) Coimbatore and the Nilgiris ; (b) Salem and Dharma-
 puri ; (c) North Arcot ; (d) Chingleput and Madras ;
 (e) South Arcot ; (f) Thanjavur ; (g) Tiruchirappalli.
- (7) One member by the councillors of the Municipal Corporation of Madras ;

(8) One member by the local bodies ;

(9) Fifteen members nominated by the Chancellor.²¹

Thus a very large elective element was introduced in the composition of the Senate. Moreover this Act made the Senate a supreme governing body of the university with power to review the action of the Syndicate and of the Academic Council. This Act, in fact, created a genuine apprehension in the minds of the Brahmins that they could not continue to hold sway over the Senate as there was much scope for non-Brahmin elements to enter. The reaction of *Nyaya Dipika* is worth quoting here :

The speeches of Mr. Satyamurti and others clearly show that the Brahman members of the Senate are now overtaken by the fear that they will not only lose the opportunity of showing partiality to the Brahmins hereafter, on account of the admission of the zamindars and the other non-degree holders as members therein, but also that the new educational policy which they may introduce, may help to produce a greater number of educated persons among the non-Brahman communities.²²

The enlargement of the Senate facilitated the Justice Party to bring its own nominees gradually into that forum. The university, after the passing of the Act of 1923, took upon itself the nobler role of teaching and guiding research. Thus the reorganisation of the University of Madras gave splendid opportunities to the non-Brahmin leaders to promote the interests of their own communities.

Formation of Andhra University

The creation of the Andhra University was one of the remarkable deeds done by the Justice Government during its tenure of office. It satisfied the long-felt need of the Telugu people who made a demand for a separate university as early as 1913. There was a feeling on the part of the Telugu-speaking people that the University of Madras had not given enough encouragement to Telugu language and literature. It was lamented that incom-

tent people were appointed members of the Telugu Text Book committee. Moreover there was a strong impression among the Telugu-speaking people that the students from Telugu regions were looked upon as 'unwelcome foreigners' in the University of Madras. They felt that a separate university was an imperative necessity "to mitigate the educational backwardness of the 'Telugus' by imparting education to them through the Telugu medium."⁹³ With the establishment of the University of Mysore in 1916 and the Osmania in 1918, the tempo of the demand for the Andhra University increased.

Immediately after the formation of the first Justice Ministry the notion of Telugu university was rigorously advocated by the leaders of all political parties hailing from Telugu regions. Educationalists like C. R. Reddy, made a forceful plea in favour of starting a university for the Andhras. The Senate of the Madras University in a resolution dated 15th October, 1920 communicated to the Government of Madras its view that "the increase in demand for liberal education in this Presidency should be met by the establishment of more universities and by distribution of the territorial areas of the existing university, so as to provide, as far as practicable, at least one university for each linguistic area within the Presidency."⁹⁴ Since education was one of the subjects of the 'transferred half', the question of starting a university lay in the hands of the Justice Ministry. A committee under Stratham was constituted to study the feasibility of establishing a university in Andhra region. It gave its report on the proposed university in 1924. A bill for the Andhra University was finally drafted on the lines indicated in the report and introduced by A. P. Patro in the legislative council in August, 1925. This enactment aimed at the "rapid development in the study of Telugu language and literature."⁹⁵ The Andhra University was started at Bezwada on 26th April 1926 with jurisdiction over all the Telugu districts, even though there was considerable controversy regarding the location of the headquarters. It took nearly three years to choose the place where the university could be located. Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam and Anantapur were the alternative places suggested for the headquarters of the university.

At last in 1929 due to the earnest efforts of the founder Vice-Chancellor, C. R. Reddy, Visakhapatnam was chosen as the venue of this great temple of learning. This was the first university in the whole of the Indian sub-continent started in the name of a linguistic group. It is considered that it was also the first university which provided for the use of the Indian languages such as Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and Oriya as medium of instruction and examination. However, the establishment of Andhra University encouraged the Tamilians to demand the creation of a separate university in the heart of the Tamil country in order to promote the interests of Tamil culture, obviously because the University of Madras with its Sanskrit and Brahminical affiliations failed to give the Tamils the right kind of cultural atmosphere and training.²⁶

Economic Sphere

The Presidency of Madras was in the beginning of this century politically 'benighted', economically backward and industrially tardy inspite of its rich resources. Enormous amounts of raw materials such as raw skins and hides, oil seeds and raw cotton were exported. However, the capitalists of the Province were not enterprising. Therefore, the industrial progress of the Presidency was almost next to nothing.

State Aid to Industries Act

The Justice Party desired to place the Presidency of Madras rather prominently on the industrial map of the sub-continent. K. V. Reddi Naidu who was incharge of Industries in the first Justice Ministry took earnest efforts to promote the industrial growth of this Presidency by bringing forth an act called State Aid to Industries Act, which is considered the 'magnum opus of his life'. The Act was intended mainly to assist the establishment and development of industries that had an important bearing on the economic development of the Presidency.²⁷ The categories of industries that were selected to receive state aid were as follows :

- (1) New or nascent industries ;
- (2) Industries to be newly introduced into areas where such industries were undeveloped ; and

(3) Cottage industries.⁹⁸

The forms of financial aid contemplated in the Act were :

- (1) Loans ;
- (2) Subsidies for machinery and for research ;
- (3) Investment in shares and debentures ;
- (4) Guarantees for a minimum return on capital and for the due discharge of cash credits, overdrafts or advances ;
and
- (5) Concessions in the grant of land, supply of raw material, firewood and water, being properties of government.

This Act also made provision for the constitution of a statutory Board of Industries for advisory purposes in the matter of industrial development. The Board consisted of members elected by the banking, industrial and commercial organisations. It was expected that the industries of this Province would raise their head and the revenue of the government would grow in manifold ways.⁹⁹ The Justice Party could justifiably be proud of its role in committing the government to the policy of industrial development with support from public funds. By enacting this Act, the Justice Party Government provided an infrastructure for the industrial development of the Madras Presidency. Though the aims of the Act were very much laudable the financial constraints that the transferred half suffered had not allowed much industrial growth to take place. None the less this Act was a conspicuous landmark in the history of industrial growth and development of the Madras Presidency. The Department of Industries was reorganised, reducing the number of divisions to three, each under an Assistant Industrial Engineer working directly under the supervision of the Industrial Engineer.

The new industries started during the regime of the Justice Party would include

- (1) Sugar Factories
- (2) General Engineering Works
- (3) Tanneries

- (4) Cashewnut Factories
- (5) Electrical Engineering Factories
- (6) Aluminium Factories
- (7) Carpentry and Cabinet-making Works
- (8) Tram-way Workshops
- (9) Breweries and Distilleries
- (10) Cement Works
- (11) Umbrella and Soap-making Works
- (12) Ice and Aerated water Works
- (13) Oil Milling.³⁰

To disseminate industrial knowledge and skill among the people the Justice Party endeavoured to start Industrial schools in various places, of which Bellary, Calicut, and Mangalore were popular.³¹ In addition, 72 private Industrial Schools were recognised and aided with grants. In view of the development of the sugar industry in the Presidency and the necessity of providing for the training of sugar technologists, a number of scholarships in technology tenable at the Andhra University, Waltair, were instituted.³² With the starting of diploma courses in mechanical and electrical engineering, the nomenclature of the Madras Trades school was changed into Government school of Technology thereby opening new vistas in the industrial field. The State Aid to Industries Act was amended in 1935 in order to enlarge its scope. The amended Act provided that electricity from a source belonging to government might be supplied to industrial enterprises on favourable terms.³³ This enabled a happy union between electricity and industry contributing much to the industrial progress of the Presidency.

Agriculture

The Justice Party championed the cause of the landowning people and strove to improve their well-being by adopting various measures. As early as 1921 the Justice Party made its policy clear towards land-tenure. In its Fourth Annual Confederation it passed a resolution on land resettlement which runs as follows : " This confederation is strongly of opinion that land is overburdened with taxation at present and that periodical revisions

of settlement are calculated to create serious discontent amongst the people." In moving this resolution M. D. Devadoss, M.L.C., drew the attention of the members to the defects in the system of land revenue settlement, and he pointed out, the assessment on lands in Madras was much heavier than that of Bombay or Bengal where the same system of revenue settlement was in existence. He highlighted further that the periodical revision of assessment in Madras Presidency inflicted great hardship on the poor ryot and in places like Tinnevely district they were paying as much as Rupees twenty per acre. By adopting this resolution the Justice Party proclaimed that it was keen in safeguarding the interests of the poor agrarian population.³⁴

The grovelling poverty coupled with heavy burden of loan at an exorbitant rate of interest made the life of agriculturists miserable and deplorable. In order to offer succour, the Justice Party Government enacted a series of legislations of which the Agriculturists' Loans (Amendment) Act of 1935 was very important. Though this Act amended the Act of 1884 by inserting a single word 'indebtedness' for 'distress', it conferred a great boon on agriculturists by permitting the grant of loans to them for the relief of indebtedness.³⁵

The next important relief measure which the Justice Party Government brought forth was the Madras Co-operative Land Mortgage Banks (Amendment) Act. The primary object of this Act was to advance money to small landholders on easy terms repayable in twenty to twenty-five years. This Act enabled the Mortgage Banks to make payments to creditors in discharge of prior debts of the mortgagors at their registered offices.³⁶

The Madras Estates Land (Amendment) Act, 1934

A significant legislative measure which the Ministry of Bobbili passed in 1934 was the amendment to the Estates Land Act. This Act was considered necessary in order to remove some of the difficulties experienced in the working of the Land Act of 1908. The main principle and object were to safeguard the rights of the cultivating tenants. It prevented the occupancy

right being appropriated by middlemen, whose only interest in land was to extract as much rent as possible from the cultivating tenants. The laudable thing behind this legislative measure was that the cause of the poor tenants was championed by a zamindar who happened to be the Chief Minister of the State.

A further amendment to this Act, famously known as the *Inams* Act, was an Act of far-reaching importance ever placed on the statute book. But the amendment bill created a heated debate in the Madras Legislative Council and the Rajah of Bobbili was attributed with communal designs in bringing forth this Act on the ground that most of the *inamdars* were only Brahmins and they were not represented in the legislative council. The Chief Minister made a brilliant statement elucidating the objects of this legislation :

“ One third of the Presidency was in the hands of zamindars and one third of it in the hands of major and minor *inamdars*. In 5,000 *inam* villages, there were five million cultivators. By this Bill, the government sought to ensure the happiness of the cultivators of the land who were then in the state of serfdom and slavery. The cultivating tenant had inherent rights of property in the land, subject to his paying reasonable rent. If the *inamdars* had bought and sold the interests of the tenant in the land, they had been dealing with properties to which they had no rights, and it was not good for any criticism at this stage to say that this amendment to the *inams* bill was in the nature of confiscatory legislation. On the other hand, it sought to give what was due to the tenant and asking *inamdars* to give up the rights of their tenants which they have expropriated themselves.⁸⁷ ”

The main purpose of this Act was to confer the right of *Kudivaram*⁸⁸ on millions of agriculturists though there was much opposition from the *inamdars*. On their deputation to the governor the Act was thrice returned to the council before it could be passed. The Act also brought the whole *inam* villages under the definition of ‘ estates ’⁸⁹ *Tamil Nadu* wrote an editorial

about the deputation of the *inamdars* and about the memorandum submitted to the governor as follows :

It is not proper to support the monopolistic rights of a few *inamdars* and impose disabilities on lakhs of poor tenants thereby. If justice is really to be dispensed to the people of this country, the government should confiscate all *inam* lands without giving any compensation whatever to the owners thereof. We appeal to the Viceroy to give his assent to the bill passed by the Government of Madras, as many more beneficial measures like this have to be enacted in the interests of the ryots in India.⁴⁰

The *Inams* Act was regarded as the most progressive one conferring the rights of '*Kudivaram*' on thousands of tenants in *inam* villages. It is true that no ministry in any province of the sub-continent ventured to bring forth such a radical legislation to protect the interests of the poor folk.

The Malabar Tenancy Bill

A much controversial tenancy bill that the Legislative Council of Madras ever debated was the celebrated Malabar Tenancy Bill. It was a timely legislation which gave a solace to the tenants of Malabar, who suffered from the ills of merciless eviction and excessive demands at the hands of *Janmis* (mostly Nambudiri Brahmins) who were the unquestioned owners of the entire landed property in Malabar. This legislation was partially social in character. It aimed at rectifying the defects of the '*Nayar Act*', enacted in Cochin, Travancore and British Malabar. As the *Nayar Act* was found useless because of the permanent domination of the *Janmis* in the economic field, it was felt that certain vital changes were necessary in the system of land tenure. Hence the Malabar Tenancy bill was introduced by M. Krishnan Nair in the Madras Legislative Council and it was passed with the support of the Justice Party on 2nd September 1926. The outstanding feature of this bill was "the right of occupancy given in certain cases to the cultivating *Kanamdars* and *Kuzhikanam* or other tenants and to the cultivating *Kamandars* and *Kuzhikanam* tenants."⁴¹

But the governor refused his assent on the ground that "it took away from the members of one section of the community, without any adequate compensation, rights over property in which they had been confirmed by a century of legal decisions."⁴³ However, the bill was finally passed by the council on 1st March 1930. Under the bill both the *Janmis* and the tenants stood to gain certain advantages. The first and foremost was that the *Janmi* had his customary rights recognised by law. Now he would be entitled statutorily not only to renewal of fees but also to fair rent. The bill also secured to him the right to resume his land for his own *bona fide* use. The tenant on the other hand, whatever the nature of his tenancy whether *Verumpattam*, *Kanam* or *Kuzhikanam*⁴³ had now a guarantee that he should not be arbitrarily evicted.⁴⁴ It is to be noted here that the Justice Party both on the treasury bench and in the opposition espoused the cause of the poor tenants thereby proclaiming that it was a party in favour of the **have-nots**.

Social Sphere

The Justice Party which adopted 'social justice' as one of its declared principles was able to "create a spirit of intelligent enquiry in the minds of the people and impelled them to take their rightful place in the administration of the country. It ... stimulated a sense of self-respect in the minds of the members of the depressed classes ... gained for them a position of vantage in the council of the land."⁴⁵

Fight Against Brahmin Monopoly

The communal representation for the non-Brahmins in the public services was a cherished goal of the Justice Party. From the beginning, the Justice Party insisted that the interests of the various non-Brahmin communities should be taken care of in filling up the appointments to all grades. In the very first non-Brahmin Conference held at Coimbatore in 1917 a resolution on public services with particular reference to the recommendations of the Public Service Commission was adopted. It reads as follows :

This conference ... **begs** to point out that, unless stringent rules are framed and carried out, the object of the recommendations will be defeated, and suggests that the following among other rules ought to be adopted :

- (a) When competent applicants belonging to different communities apply for a place, it should be given to the applicant belonging to the community which has not had due representation in the office or service.
- (b) Appointments should be so distributed that not more than forty per cent of the appointments are held by the same community in the same office or service.
- (c) One third of the appointments of Sub-Magistrates and Deputy Tahsildars and a fair proportion of those of Deputy Collectors should be thrown open for direct recruitment, and preference should be given to deserving young men belonging to communities not duly represented in the services.⁴⁶

As soon as the party assumed administrative responsibility of the Madras Province under the diarchical constitution it started agitating for the representation of the non-Brahmins in public services. The recommendations of the Miller Committee Report⁴⁷ of the Mysore State had deeply impressed the non-Brahmin leaders who wanted to implement such a scheme of giving the non-Brahmins in the Presidency a larger proportion of government appointments. O. Thanikachalam Chetti, a prominent member of the Justice Party in the legislative council, moved a resolution on 5th August 1921 urging the Government of Madras to adopt the instructions issued by the Mysore Government. The above resolution reads as follows :

That this council recommends to the government that a standing order be issued to every officer or board or body of officers authorised to make appointments to the public services to give preference to candidates from the non-Brahmin communities (including therein Christians, Muhammadans

and members of the Depressed classes) until a provision of at least 66% amongst the offices carrying a salary of Rs. 100/- per mensem and upwards and a provision of 75% amongst offices carrying a salary less than Rs. 100/- are reached within a period of seven years from this date so long as such candidates possess the minimum qualifications prescribed by the rules relating to appointment to the public services, although such candidates may be less qualified than the Brahman candidates.⁴⁸

Explaining the purpose of this resolution O. Thanikachalam Chetti observed :

This resolution provides a remedy for a long-standing, deep-seated and fostering sore from which the non-Brahmin communities have been suffering for a long time. In this Presidency, Sir, he continued to state, the non-Brahmins for decades past, have been kept down from rising higher, both in the matter of recruitment and in the matter of getting promotions, by the Brahmins who managed to capture higher appointments in the state, leaving the crumbs to their less fortunate brethren.⁴⁹

There was a very heated and acrimonious debate over the resolution of O. T. Chetti. Views for and against the resolution were put forth. R. Venkataratnam, a seasoned Justicite, pleaded before the house that the eagerness shown in the matter of communal representation was not an outcome of an inordinate craving for the loaves and fishes of office, but it emanated from the conviction that such a representation would serve as a "powerful stimulus to education and sure index to the civil recognition and the social responsibility of the community as a whole."⁵⁰ There was no enthusiastic welcome to the resolution from the executive council. A. R. Knapp, its Home member viewed the resolution with consternation. Since the debate went on relentlessly A. R. Knapp accepted reluctantly the resolution with certain modifications.

The resolution as modified and accepted by Government runs the follows :

This council makes a recommendation to the government to the effect that with a view to increasing the proportion of posts held by non-Brahmin communities the principles, prescribed for the Revenue Department in Board's Standing Order No. 128 (2) be at once extended to all departments of government, and be made applicable not only to the principal appointments but to posts of all grades, and the government should issue orders accordingly and insist on their being enforced, and that to this end half-yearly returns showing the progress made should be submitted by the heads of such office, and that such return should be made available to members of the legislative council.⁵¹

The resolution was unanimously passed by the legislative council. In giving effect to this resolution, the Government of Madras issued a G.O. on 16th September, 1921 which is famously known as the First Communal G.O. (1) The Government of Madras in accordance with the G.O. directed that the principle prescribed for the Revenue Department in Board's Standing Order No. 128 (2), on the subject of the distribution of appointments among various castes and communities, should be extended to appointments of all grades in the several departments of government.

(2) All heads of departments and other officers empowered to make appointments were requested to adhere strictly to this principle in filling up vacancies in future.

(3) The G.O. required Heads of departments, Collectors and District Judges to submit half-yearly returns showing the number of men newly entertained in the permanent service during that period in respect to their own offices and subordinate offices under their control for the following categories : Brahmans, non-Brahman Hindus, Indian Christians, Muhammadans, Europeans and Anglo-Indians and others.⁵²

Though the government was earnest in implementing the G.O. in its true spirit, the expression 'newly and permanent'

occurring in the G.O. were taken advantage of by Heads of departments who were either Brahmins or under Brahmin influence. They resorted to many subterfuges to evade compliance with the order. In order to prevent the violation of the resolution accepted by the government, the Justice Party tabled a resolution "for the substitution for them of returns showing not merely the appointments made newly to permanent posts but returns of all appointments whether permanent, temporary or acting, whether the officers appointed were appointed for the first time or promoted from subordinate grades."⁵³

None the less, the resolution did not give any scope for discussion in the legislative council owing to the termination of the session. However, the government recognised the existence of dissatisfaction regarding the inadequate nature of the returns called for by the G.O. of 16th September 1921 and it also felt the necessity of giving fuller information of the returns in order to show the progress made in the implementation of the policy in the matter of representation of the various communities in the public services. Hence the Second Communal G.O. was issued on 15th August 1922, even before the commencement of the next term of the council. This order was much more lengthier in its contents, more comprehensive in details, more definitive in its instruction than the earlier one.⁵⁴ Its directions are as follows :

- (1) Endeavours should always be made to divide the principal appointments in each district among several castes.
- (2) In order to give effect to this policy the government directed that the principle specified in the Board's Standing Order should be translated into action both at the time of initial recruitment and at every point at which men were promoted wholly by selection and not by seniority.
- (3) Besides, the government gave direction that yearly returns were to be made by the Heads of departments showing the extent to which each of the six main subdivisions of the communities was represented in each department.

The return was to be submitted only with regard to non-gazetted officers divided into two categories : one drawing Rs. 100/- and over and the other drawing from Rs. 37 to Rs. 100. As regards the gazetted officers the government accepted the suggestion contained in another resolution moved in the council to the effect that a column indicating the community to which each officer belonged should be added to the *Quarterly Civil List*.

These orders mark a crowning success for the Justice Party in its struggle against the monopoly of public services by a minority community namely the Brahmins. By positively responding to the pressure of the Justice Party, the Government of Fort St. George had accomplished one of its cherished goals. The very fact that the communal G.Os remained only on record books shows that there was much ado about nothing until a G.O. on communal representation was passed by the Government of Madras in 1928 adopting the principle of communal rotation in recruitment to public service.⁵⁵

In fact, the early success of the Justice Party encouraged it to press for further concessions from the government in order to achieve its aims and objectives. The noble principles which lay behind the communal G.Os have been incorporated in the Indian Constitution by the first Amendment Act passed in the year 1951. It cannot be denied that some of the ideals for which the Justice Party stood had not failed to fascinate even administrators like Jawaharlal Nehru.

Under Montford Reforms, in the transferred departments, the ministers were expected to control the members of the civil service. But on the contrary they had no authority over the permanent officials. The promotions and postings including transfers were nominally within the purview of the authority of the governor. But what was in practice was altogether different. It was only the Chief Secretary of the government who actually possessed powers to do anything with the service matters. Paradoxically, the minister had no authority over his own secretary. However, this anomaly was well recognised by the Indian ministers and European officials. Hence a spirit of accommodation between

these two categories emerged in view of the changed character of the administration.⁵⁶ The communal representation in public services that the Justice Party achieved by pressurising the government encouraged the Justice Ministers to indianise the services at higher level in their respective departments. It was the Rajah of Panagal who appointed Indians in the place of Europeans especially in medical departments. "His policy as the Minister of Public Health was marked by a spirit of progressiveness Within the limits laid down by the Secretary of State he pressed for the Indianisation of services and made his pressure felt."⁵⁷ The Vizagapatnam Medical College and the Lady Willingdon Medical School for women were the standing monuments to his initiative and constructive labours in the process of indianisation of services. In the matter of indianisation of services even the Rajah of Bobbili fought a relentless fight with the British I.C.S. officers. Indianisation of services in the departments of transferred half was nothing but a logical extension of communal representation which the Justice Party cherished.

The Hindu Religious Endowments Act

A far-reaching social legislation which the Justice Party enacted during its regime was the Hindu Religious Endowments Act. It was a revolutionary measure. As a non-Brahmin political organisation, the Justice Party had pledged to fight against the domination of the Brahmins in religious sphere also. Its attitude towards the religious and charitable institutions was distinctly made clear in the very first conference of the party held at Coimbatore in 1917. The conference adopted a resolution protesting against the utilization of *chatram* and other charitable funds for the founding of Sanskrit schools and recommended to the government and to the trustees of such institutions to use those funds whenever available for the establishment of primary schools. The speakers on this resolution did not fail to reveal that "it was only the Brahmin community which benefitted by the establishment of Sanskrit schools." "Not even a single non-Brahmin was admitted into such institutions despite the fact that it was mostly their money with which these charitable endowments were instituted."

Dr. T. M. Nair while supporting the resolution, pointed out how the *Mahant* of Tirupati utilized the *mutt* funds in an objectionable manner by starting a Sanskrit school. He vehemently criticised that the funds of the Tirupati *mutt* were mostly utilized for starting exclusively Brahmin institutions.⁵⁸ This practice, Dr. T. M. Nair wanted to put down. The monopoly of Brahmins in religious institutions, the Justice Party decided to fight by bringing a legislation on Hindu Religious Endowments which fell within the purview of the transferred half. More than this, the polluted atmosphere that prevailed in the ecclesiastical sphere of South India warranted a revolutionary enactment. The Hindu temples and *mutts* in Madras Presidency had enormous "properties either through endowments or through the accumulation of income derived from pilgrims." It was unfortunate that the endowments of *mutts* which were originally meant for charitable and religious purposes had virtually become the private property of the individuals under whose control the *mutts* were. They maintained no accounts, and auditing of accounts was a thing unheard of in their annals. The funds were utilised in anyway they chose. Though there was absolute necessity on the part of the government "to correct the abuse of power by com mittees and individuals placed in charge of Hindu endowment funds" it, in conformity with its declared policy of religious neutrality, never intervened in their affairs. However, when the Justice Party came to power, it decided to eradicate the abuses accumulated in the portals of religious institutions in pursuance of its policy. Hence a comprehensive legislation on religious endowments was framed and the bill was moved on 18th December 1922.

The Object of the Bill

"The object of the Bill, which was to supersede as far as the Madras Presidency was concerned the Government of India Act, XX of 1863 was to ensure the efficient administration of Hindu Religious Endowments in the Presidency."⁵⁹ The special feature of the bill was the constitution of a special board on the lines of Charities Commission in England to supervise and control the management of religious endowments. It "placed all the temples

—except those which were strictly proprietary and private—directly under its control.”⁶⁰ It gave enormous powers to the Board to take over the management of these endowments in case of maladministration. It was also invested with the power of inspecting them and get their accounts audited. A striking provision of the bill which aroused a lot of hue and cry in the council was the diversion of the surplus funds of religious endowments for purposes of public utility such as “education in the Hindu religion, sanitation of pilgrim centres and other objects of allied interest, which would benefit the Hindu community as a whole.”⁶¹ A large body of public opinion in the Presidency was directed towards opposing the bill. Representations to this effect were made to the governor requesting him to withhold his assent. But memorials appreciating the government’s decision to give up the policy of neutrality were sent to the governor. However, the bill was passed by an absolute majority and sent on to the governor for his assent. After an elaborate discussion with the Viceroy he decided to return the bill to the legislative Council raising objections to some of the provisions of the bill with a request for their reconsideration. In the light of the suggestions given by the governor the bill was amended and was introduced in the next council and passed into law as Act I of 1925.

It was subsequently reserved for the assent of the Viceroy as per the section 81 (3) of the Government of India Act of 1919. The Viceroy gave his assent justifying that the bill contained no provision vitally objectionable on principle to merit a veto. As soon as the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India had given their assent, the Act was at once put into force.⁶² Of all the Acts it was the only Act which took long number of years to pass. The council sat more than eighty-five times to discuss and debate the various provisions of the Act. Approximately 1,200 amendments were introduced in the local legislative council. Amendments of drastic nature were totally rejected. However, amendments of minor nature were accepted. Despite the long drawn battle, the contents of the bill were not in any way diluted. The original spirit of the bill was retained. It may well be regarded as a drastic piece of social and religious legislation which the

Justice Party enacted. It cut the very grass root of an organised system of corruption and misuse of funds that had been flourishing in temples and *mutts* for years past.⁶³

Rural Reconstruction

The Justice Party launched various progressive schemes of rural development to meet the needs of agrarian population. The village reconstruction was one of the tasks personally undertaken by the Rajah of Panagal when he was the First Minister. But the financial stringency that diarchy imposed on transferred half, contributed towards making the task of rural reconstruction more difficult than it should have been. It cannot be gainsaid that rural reconstruction programmes were anticipated by the Justice Party many years ago.⁶⁴

(a) Public Health

Justice Party, as a welfare measure, during 1922 and 1923, introduced a scheme to prevent the spread of diseases. A mobile district health unit was organised in each district to rush to any spot where the slightest indication of an epidemic was noticed. These mobile units were capable of putting down the sporadic diseases before they could spread over to wider areas. The statistics of the early 20s of the present century show that the scheme of preventive medicine had done considerable good to the people of the Presidency. Epidemics like cholera, smallpox and plague were effectively controlled by these medical units. It stands to the credit of the Rajah of Panagal that he founded rural dispensaries in different parts of the Presidency to look after the health of the villagers.

(b) Forming of Village Roads

To augment the village economy and to provide adequate marketing facilities for the villagers, the Justice Party started a scheme of laying village roads. These roads not only formed as a link between villages and the towns but also provided excellent marketing facilities for the agricultural products of the villagers. During the ministry of the Rajah of Panagal, the Government of Madras gave a matching grant of Rs. 3 lakhs to each district,

with a request to supplement it with an equal amount and devote it for the specific purpose of forming village roads. When Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar was the President of the District Board of Coimbatore, 1,000 miles of new village roads were formed entirely due to the goodwill and encouragement of the Justice Ministry.⁶⁵ Thus the village reconstruction scheme became one of the successful endeavours of the Justice Party.

(c) Slum Clearance and Housing Schemes

The Corporation of Madras, the formidable fortress of the Justice Party from its inception, adopted various schemes to make the metropolis a clean city. The Town Improvement Committee of the Corporation which gave Slum Clearance and Housing Schemes top priority did commendable service in making the city of Madras a zone of good health and hygiene. Model houses were built for the poor. Public bathing houses were constructed at congested areas where there was scarcity of water. Many of the schemes introduced by the Justice Party served as examples to be emulated by the succeeding governments. For instance, the Slum Clearance and Housing Schemes of the Justice Party were perhaps the nucleus of the present day Slum Clearance and Housing Boards.

The Uplift of the Depressed Classes

One of the main planks of the programme of the Justice Party was the upliftment of the Depressed classes. A community which had been cursed for generations as untouchables acquired only during the time of the Justice Party government the statutory right of entering all public institutions, using public wells and public roads.⁶⁶ As a social welfare measure, the Government of the Justice Party implemented a scheme of assignment of waste lands in every ryotwary village for the people of Depressed classes. Of the 7,36,000 acres of land reserved for them, 4,40,000 were assigned upto 31st March 1935.⁶⁷ It was only the Justice Party which believed in the principles of social equality that stretched a helping hand to the *Panchamas* to raise up to the level of caste Hindus. The campaign organised by the Justice Party for temple entry for the people of Depressed classes in various places such as

Virudachalam is to be noted here.⁶⁸ The famous communal G.O., one of the remarkable works of the Justice Party, gave them a splendid opportunity to occupy high official positions like Deputy Collectors and other dignified jobs in Madras Civil Service. Since there were no sufficient men with necessary qualifications certain concessions were granted to them as long as the Justice Party was in power. The minimum general educational qualification for appointment to subordinate services was appreciably lowered and the age limit was increased to twenty-seven in the case of ministerial services and twenty-six in the case of other services for the Depressed classes.⁶⁹ The party felt proud in renaming the people of the Depressed classes as the Adi Dravidas. In this regard, it is apt to recall that in 1920 Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar moved a resolution in the Corporation of Madras to change the caste title *Panchama* to Adi Dravida.⁷⁰ This change was actually desired by the Pariah Maha Jana Sabha which presented a memorial to the government requesting it to give them the ancient and proper name Dravidian instead of Pariah. Convinced of the necessity of such a change, the Justice Party passed a resolution in the local legislative council in 1922 recommending that the name Adi Dravida should replace the caste titles such as *Panchama* and Pariah.⁷¹ It also compelled the Government of Madras to give them adequate representation in the local legislative council and bodies. Accordingly, one Adi Dravida was given representation on the Simon Committee, another was sent to the Round Table Conference, yet another was a recipient of the title of Dewan Bahadur.⁷² Many of the programmes of the Justice Party launched for the elevation of the Depressed classes were far ahead of the times and served as forerunner to the programmes of Gandhi.

The Enfranchisement of Women

In spite of the fact that the Montford Reforms aimed at the progressive realisation of responsible government in India it was retrograde in certain respects. It denied the women the right to seek election to the legislative council. The Justice Party which was noted for its egalitarian principles, championed the cause of the women and fought for their enfranchisement. Though this issue had to be fought at national level within India and in the

British Parliament, the Justice Party had chosen to fight for this issue in the Madras Legislative Council. M. Krishnan Nair, a leading Justicite, moved a resolution on 1st April 1921 that the qualifications which entitled men to vote be made applicable to women. This was seconded by the Rajah of Ramnad with humour and wit :

In my family a very strict *gosha* system prevails and therefore I rise to second the resolution most heartily because I do not think that, that ought to be a matter which should prevent the giving of this franchise to women. A lawyer friend of mine has told me that under the General Clauses Act and under the Evidence Act man includes woman. I came across an inscription, relating to Uttaramerur *Chatturvidamangalam*, I think in Tanjore district, from which I learnt that women even a thousand years ago were serving on several committees such as Garden Committee, Tank Committee, etc. If this is so, I fail to see why they should not be made eligible now with the advance of education and liberal views in the twentieth century.⁷³

This resolution was warmly supported by several non-official members, and finally passed by a majority of thirty-four votes.⁷⁴ This measure which illustrates the broad-visioned liberal spirit of the Justice Party, stands as a supreme "piece of legislation with an avowedly social reform bias."⁷⁵ The liberation of women from the thralldom of cruel customs and traditions was one of the declared principles of the Justice Party. It vehemently opposed dedication of girls to temples. When Muthulakshmi Reddi introduced a bill in the local legislative council on 2nd February 1929 for the abolition of Devadasi system by seeking an amendment to the Hindu Religious Endowments Act, the Justice Party, though sitting in opposition, rendered whole-hearted support and co-operation. It was thus proved beyond doubt that the Justice Party was revolutionary both in deeds and in spirit.

The Cultural Revolt of the Non-Brahmins

The Justice Party aimed at undermining the domination of the Brahmins in religious sphere. Some of the leaders of the non-Brahmin communities endeavoured to study Vedas and to chant

mantras in order to dispense with the services of the Brahmin priests in religious functions. The Vaisyas were the first people to revolt against the Brahmin domination inasmuch as the Brahmins denied them the right to *Upanayana* and to perform various religious ceremonies according to Vedic rites. So they began to learn Vedas and other religious literature. Atmuri Lakshminarasimha Somayajulu, a leading member of the Vaisya community of Telugu region was perhaps the first from the community to pave a new path and perform *yajna*. "This was followed by many Vyasyas who rejected the services of the Brahmins in social and religious functions and a nominee of their community was asked to perform various religious rites."⁷⁶ Leading Justicites like K. V. Reddi Naidu boycotted the Brahmin priests for the marriage of his eldest son K. V. Gopalasamy. Similarly Dr. C. Natesa Mudaliar conducted the marriage of his daughter Tripurasundariammal without the services of the Brahmin *purohit*. The sacred ceremonies connected with the marriage were conducted by two non-Brahmin priests well-versed in such rites who were specially brought down from Coimbatore.⁷⁷ The Kammas of the Andhra region in order to boycott Brahmins trained some Kammas in priestcraft and designated them as Kamma-Brahmins. For all religious ceremonies of the Kammas, the services of the Kamma Brahmins were utilised. Special training schools were started for the purpose of teaching Vedic literature and *mantras* at Kollur in Tenali taluk.⁷⁸

This endeavour, though an expression of the doctrine of Self-Respect, had a very little success and its impact on the masses was limited. In spite of the fact that it has made much headway in the 50s and in the 60s of the present century, it should be admitted that the cultural ties between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins was stronger and it prevented complete alienation of one from the other. Thus the performance of the Justice Party in social sphere was a record of brilliant achievement. However, its policies and programmes were often condemned as communal. It was a democratic party with egalitarian principles which it strove to achieve step by step despite the constitutional limitations imposed by Montford Reforms.

CHAPTER VI

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38. *Kudivaram* means a cultivator's share in the produce of the land held by him, as distinguished from the landlord's share which is known as *Melvaram*.
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to go to non-Brahmin Hindus, two to Brahmins, two to Muslims, two to Anglo-Indians or Christians, and one to the Depressed Classes (Harijans) ”.

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CHAPTER VII

The Justice Party at its Nadir

The Justice Party which formed the government in 1921 under Montford constitution remained in power, first from 1921 to 1926 and again from 1930 to 1937. Its overwhelming majority during the period of its First Ministry enabled it to influence the British Government to issue two communal G.Os which provided splendid opportunities for the non-Brahmins to enter government services. The series of legislations such as the Madras University Act, State Aid to Industries Act and Hindu Religious Endowments Act which the Justice Party enacted during the palmy days of Panagal earned immense appreciation. In fact, it was in the regime of the Rajah of Panagal that the Justice Party reached the zenith of its power.

1. A Position of Powerlessness

The diarchy imposed a very heavy strain on the Justice Party which was not able to carry out its electoral promises. They had not realised the climax of diarchical absurdity till they confronted a position of 'powerlessness'. It is truism that the ministers were clothed with responsibility without authority.

It was felt that the Justice Party became a victim of the constitution which it accepted enthusiastically to experiment under the Montford Reforms. As E. F. Irschick remarks, the Reforms of 1919 "stultified the political acumen and apparatus of the Justice Party, and its victory in the uncontested 1920 elections was all too easy"¹ With unresisted position in the legislative council, the Justice Party developed a spirit of complacency which inevitably produced disharmony, disaffection and disunion among the rank and file.

2. Internal Faction

The leaders of the Justice Party wanted 'a fair share' in Government appointments as the lords of the soil. As has been noted already, they claimed government appointments as a source of political power. That is why even leaders like A. Ramaswami Mudaliar did not hesitate to describe the Non-Brahmin movement as 'jobocracy'.²

Immediately after coming to power, the Justice Party therefore earnestly made attempts to find more job opportunities for the non-Brahmins, through the two communal G.Os.) The diarchy gave the privilege of appointing District Board Chairmen to the Minister for Local Self-Government and this created a problem of fosterage. A few of the Justicites like C. R. Reddy sought the position of atleast the President of the District Board of Chittoor. The real difficulty was that there were many more aspirants than there were places. (The Rajah of Panagal himself incurred the displeasure of many in the distribution of patronage among his party men. The Justice Party thus suffered from rift as early as 1923 when the Second Ministry was formed.) The no-confidence motion of C. R. Reddy was obviously due to the disappointment that a few Justicites faced. When the Rajah of Panagal spoke on the no-confidence motion, he candidly admitted on the floor of the house that he realised "the significance of Gladstone's complaint that for every appointment he made, he created twenty enemies and one doubtful friend"³ Humourously C. R. Reddy also used to remark about the loyalties of the Justicites that

“appointments result in attachments while disappointments lead to detachments”⁴ These words were cited by A. Ramaswami Mudaliar soon afterwards at a public meeting when he referred to C. R. Reddy's no-confidence motion and described him ‘a perfect example’ of his own quotation. It was the failure of the Rajah of Panagal to appoint C. R. Reddy as the President of the Chittoor District Board that brought about the detachment between them. (Perceptibly the leading Justicites like C. R. Reddy had become hunters of power and position which ultimately made the party faction-ridden.) Hence its set-back in 1926 elections. The defeat in the elections tarnished the image of the party. The early days’ enthusiasm coupled with harmony found among the members of the Justice Party vanished. A novel tendency arose suddenly from a section of the partymen to think in terms of joining the Congress perhaps to non-Brahminise it. As a result, at the special Non-Brahmin Confederation at Coimbatore on 2nd July 1927, under the presidentship of Kumaraswami Reddiyar. (a minister of the Justice Party in Muniswami Naidu's Ministry) a resolution was adopted permitting the members of the Justice Party to join the Congress. However, this resolution had no impact on the commonality of the Party.

3. Lack of Proper Leadership

The death of the Rajah of Panagal on 16th December 1928 left the party without a capable leader. It was a flagrant defect that the founders of the Justice Party had failed to build a second line of leaders. So a vacuum was created when the Rajah of Panagal died. “It was really the end of the party, though for eight more years it led a twilight existence and even held office between 1930 and 1936”.⁵ The subsequent tussle for leadership between Muniswami Naidu and the Rajah of Bobbili was a sad tale and it made the internal schism in the party much more pronounced, which ultimately led to its ruin.

4. Bobbillism

The aristocratic attitude of the Rajah of Bobbili created a gulf between the leader and the followers. It is well portrayed

by no less a person than his own admirer, K. M. Balasubramanian :

The popular leader of the party he has never been and by his very nature he can never be. But due to the tragic lack of any better or even an equal leader, the wiser among his party willingly submitted to his yoke. He chose the better way of ruling over men by being their superior in wealth.... He imposes his will over every person he deals with, his loyal followers in the party or the long connected colleagues in the cabinet. He must have his way come whatever may.⁶

His overbearing and autocratic attitude alienated many of the sympathisers of the Justice Party. In order to stabilize his position and power, he adopted all sorts of political manoeuvres which were very much criticised by papers like *Sunday Chronicle* which highlighted the misdeeds of Bobbili in a leading article entitled 'Bobbilism at work'.⁷ It was unfortunate that political opportunism became his creed.

5. The Election Reverse in 1934

The 1934 Election to the Imperial Legislative Assembly gave a stimulating blow to the Justice Party. The stalwarts of the party, viz., A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and R. K. Shanmugham Chetti were defeated. Betrayal of the partymen was mainly responsible for the set-back in the election. It was largely believed that the Justice Party suffered defeat "not so much by the strength of opponents' campaigns as by the intrigues of their party colleagues".⁸ The following was the observation of *Justice* about the outcome of the election of 1934 :

No party can win any election if there is treachery in its ranks. That is the lesson of the defeat of Mr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and of Sir R. K. Shanmugham Chettiar. The defeat is due to the duplicity of some of our own partymen, though it is primarily the result of the successful campaign of misrepresentations and lies carried on by Congressmen.... As regards our partymen, we must say that the

time has now come when we must put our house in order purge our organisation of harmful elements and purify our party which stands for a great cause.⁹

It cannot be denied that this election reverse accelerated the process of the decline of the Justice Party.

The Surging Tide of Nationalism

The defeat of the Justice Party in 1937 elections made it defunct. It was proved beyond doubt that the Justice Party with its regionalistic stance was not able to withstand the onslaught of nationalism. The rigorous propaganda that the Congressites carried on against the Justice Party had a tremendous impact on the electorate. Hardgrave opines: "The Justice Party had strangled itself on the rope it had woven : support of the British Raj had brought it to power, but with the impact of national self-consciousness and aspiration for Swaraj, its Imperial connections brought its defeat."¹⁰

CHAPTER VII

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Conclusion

The emergence of the Justice Party in the second decade of this century constitutes a landmark in the history of South India. A historical study of the Party illustrates how the long-smouldering discontent, hatred and suspicion of the elite non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency towards Brahmins got institutionalised under the nomenclature of the S.I.L.F. whose primary purpose was "to promote the political interests of the non-Brahmin caste Hindus." By championing the cause of the non-Brahmins, it challenged the preponderance of the Brahmins in all spheres of life, more particularly in the field of education and government services, thereby introducing a social, political and cultural conflict in South India. Though a political organisation was a long felt need for the non-Brahmins of the Madras Presidency, it took a concrete shape only in the second decade of the present century. However, it was neither a sudden outcome nor an accident of history but "a well organised endeavour of a group of elite non-Brahmins who were politically articulate to establish the identity of the non-Brahmin communities" and also organise themselves into a political party. When Mrs. Besant launched a vigorous agitation for Home Rule, a large number of her enthusiastic supporters and key advisors were only Brahmins. This created a genuine apprehension

in the minds of non-Brahmin leaders that the Home Rule would eventually lead to the establishment of Brahmin rule. Indeed, the fear of Brahmin take-over of political power, if Mrs. Besant succeeded in her Home Rule agitation, compelled the non-Brahmin stalwarts to contemplate in terms of a political organisation for the amelioration of their communities. Thus the Home Rule movement of Mrs. Besant, more than any other factor, acted as a catalyst which triggered off the birth of the Justice Party. As stated already, it was only the occasion but not the cause. Since the Congress remained as a sectarian body in the hands of the Brahmins, the Justice Party took an anti-Congress posture, which was by mistake viewed by scholars like D. A. Washbrook as anti-national. It needs to be stressed that the leaders of the Justice Party were "all men of substance and standing, highly educated, and conscious of the direction and goal of their endeavours." They were not mere idealists, but practical politicians. They accepted diarchy with a view to employing the available power of the government for the uplift of the non-Brahmin communities. That was the reason why they did not believe much in the uncertain prospect of total transfer of power from a strong foreign government. "The practical and cautious realism of the Justice Party was naturally misunderstood by nationalists, as a species of cowardly and selfish betrayal of the country's cause."¹ However, it cannot be construed that this movement was engineered by the Government of Madras because of its unqualified support to the British Raj and inveterate hostility towards the Congress. Though its area of operation was confined to the Madras Presidency, it enjoyed a remarkably good support from the masses for over a decade and it functioned rather effectively through various local branches. What the Muslim League was to the Muslims, the Justice Party was to the non-Brahmins in those days.

The dynamic leadership of Dr. T. M. Nair in its early days enabled the party to grow rapidly. He carried the banner of non-Brahminism far and wide. The party convened its first conference at Coimbatore in August 1917. Thereafter a series of conferences were held in the Tamil and Telugu districts of the Presidency.

The speed with which the non-Brahmin leaders organised the conferences all over the Presidency, not only speaks volumes of their ability, but also the popularity of the non-Brahmin creed. Obtaining communal representation for non-Brahmins was one of its main objectives. To achieve this, it became necessary for the leaders of the Justice Party to send a deputation to London to plead before the Joint Select committee, and it secured a special representation for them within a remarkably short period of time. Though the policy of the Justice Party appears to be communal to a casual observer, a clear analysis of its ideologies and programmes makes it clear that its demand for communal representation was based on the principles of social justice. Therefore, they vehemently opposed 'the tyranny of caste' and the superior status of the Brahmins which the *Varna* system bestowed on them. In fine, the Justice Party stood for the 'specific purpose of overthrowing the Brahmin supremacy in the political and economic spheres and destroying their hegemony in the administrative services.... The real intentions of the founders of the party were to encourage the non-Brahmin section of the Hindus to assert itself and to claim for the non-Brahmins their share of loaves and fishes of office.'⁸ To quote E. F. Irschick "the Justice Party exemplified the manner in which Backward Classes all over India tried to enhance their position in provincial affairs."⁸ It is to be admitted that there was a tremendous political awakening among the people of the lower strata of the society after the advent of the Justice Party. This has given it a pride of place in the history of the Backward Classes Movement.

During the term of the first two councils under the diarchical constitution, the Justice Party remained in power by commanding a comfortable majority. It also earned credit for having successfully experimented diarchy in Madras. It cannot be denied that only during the regime of the Justice Party, the opposition started functioning in the legislature.

The party's legislative work was really noteworthy. "The social legislation which they undertook and carried through the councils was welcomed by the public and their activities in

educational and industrial fields were on the whole considered beneficial and in the interest of the people." The Hindu Religious Endowments Act which stands even today as a monument to the Justice Party's secularism may rightly be regarded as one of the remarkable pieces of social and religious reform attempted by the Justice Party. It cut at the roots of an organised system of corruption and misuse of funds of the Hindu temples. This Act placed the accumulated wealth of the temples and even the *mutts* under secular control. The two communal G.Os which were passed at the instance of the Justice Party stand as a record of its social policy which could not be politically reversed and this has been amply demonstrated when the principles of reservation of seats for educationally and economically Backward Classes has been accepted not only in Tamil Nadu but also in the country as a whole.

There is a general criticism that the leaders of the Justice Party could not influence the reserved half in the formulation of its general policy. It was suspected that the ministry succumbed to the influence of the executive and adopted a lukewarm attitude in 'championing the public rights against the encroachment of the Executive.'⁴ This criticism is untenable if the policy of the Justice Party is viewed from the standpoint of 'responsive co-operation' with the reserved half which the party professed from its inception.

Since the Justice Party gave the heterogeneous group of non-Brahmin communities a certain amount of coherence and unity, non-Brahminism became a popular creed of the people and an attractive vocabulary in the political dictionary of Tamil Nadu. In fact, it had become a part of its political history. It cannot be gainsaid that this party introduced 'caste idiom' into the politics of South India⁵ which transformed the style of political leadership. The non-Brahminisation of the Congress in the 30s was an inevitable consequence of this political development. It should be said to the credit of the Justice Party that it succeeded in dislodging the Brahmins from their privileged positions. The debacle of the Justice Party in the 1937 elections gave a chance

for the revival of Brahmin dominance in the politics of the Madras Presidency. However, this did not last long and their position declined irretrievably.

As C. J. Baker stated, the Justice Party virtually died with the diarchy. Some of its leaders including the Rajah of Bobbili withdrew from politics. At this juncture, the party leadership devolved on E. V. Ramaswami Naicker who had gained popularity during the anti-Hindi agitation. He believed in agitational politics rather than in constructive political activities. He took Justice Party away from its original path. He destroyed the political character of the party by the boycott of electoral politics. The secular disposition of the Justice Party was also thrown to the winds when he turned out to be a strong advocate of atheism. Similarly, the provincial autonomy which the Justice Party vociferously demanded was given a twist and a new slogan of independent Dravidian state was raised. A plea was put forward at the party conference held at Tiruvarur in 1940 demanding a Sovereign Independent Dravidasthan consisting of four southern states.⁶ The futility of this demand was not realised even by the scholar-statesman C. N. Annadurai till the hammerstroke of Anti-Secession Act fell on them in 1963. The Justice Party which had a moribund existence under E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker died at last in 1944 when he changed its name into Dravida Kazhagam. However, Naicker as a political agitator kept the ethos of non-Brahminism alive and in consequence, parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam developed a strong Dravidian, anti-North and anti-Hindi stance. The Non-Brahmin movement, which leaders like Dr. T. M. Nair and Theagaraya Chetti ushered in is still alive even though the party is no longer in existence.

F.A.R.C.E.

Alliances with Congress made by both DMK & ADMK from time to time proves well that anti north stand & anti-Hindisstance sheer political opportunism

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The Non-Brahmin Manifesto

At a conference held in Madras on the 20th November and attended by several non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence both in Madras and in the mofussil, it was resolved that measures be taken to start a company for publishing a newspaper advocating the cause of the non-Brahmin community and also that a political association be formed to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of the same community. In accordance with this, a joint stock company has been started under the name of "South Indian People's Association" for conducting a daily newspaper in English, Tamil and Telugu respectively, and also a political association has been formed under the name of "The South Indian Liberal Federation". The South Indian People's Association has issued the following manifesto addressed to non-Brahmin gentlemen throughout the Presidency under the signature of its Secretary, Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chettiar.

The Manifesto

The time has come when an attempt should be made to define the attitude of the several important non-Brahmin Indian Communities in this Presidency towards what is called "the Indian Home Rule Movement", and also to indicate certain facts with respect to their present political position. Not less than 40 out

of 41½ millions, who form the population of this Presidency, are non-Brahmins, and the bulk of the tax-payers, including a large majority of the zamindars, landholders and agriculturists, also belong to the same class. But in what passes for politics in Madras they have not taken the part to which they are entitled. They have made little or no use of their influence among the masses for the general political advancement of the country. In these days of organised effort, they maintain no proper organisations for protecting and promoting their common interests and for preventing professional and other politicians, with hardly any corresponding stake in the country, from posing as their accredited spokesmen. Nor have they a Press of their own to speak the truth on their behalf. Their political interests, therefore (as compared with those of the Brahmins who number only about a million and a half) have materially suffered.

Facts and Figures : Public Service

The Hon'ble Sir Alexander (then Mr.) Cardew, now a Member of the Madras Executive Council, in his evidence before the Public Service Commission in 1913, described, in detail, the relative positions of the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the Public Service of this Province, not certainly as a champion of non-Brahmin interests, but with a view to show that if simultaneous examinations in England and India for admission into the Indian Civil Service were introduced, the Brahmins whom he characterised as "a small rigidly exclusive caste", would swamp that Service. He is reported to have stated that in the competitive examinations for the Provincial Civil Service, which were held between 1892 and 1904, out of sixteen successful candidates fifteen were Brahmins giving a ratio of 94 per cent of Brahmin success. In the Mysore State where open competitive examinations for the Mysore Civil Service were held during the preceding 20 years, Brahmins secured 85 per cent of the vacancies. In the competition for the appointment of Assistant Engineers in Madras, the number of successful candidates, during the same period, was 17 Brahmins and 4 non-Brahmins. Similar results were produced by the competitive examination for the Accounts Departments. Out of 140 Deputy Collectors in Madras at the time, 77 were Brahmins,

30 non-Brahmin Hindus, and the rest Muhammadans, Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians. It is curious to note that even where competitive examinations did not exist, as for instance in the Subordinate Judicial Service of the Presidency, the major portion of the appointments was in the hands of the Brahmins. Sir Alexander Cardew stated that out of 128 permanent District Munsifs in 1913, 93 were Brahmins, 25 non-Brahmin Hindus and the rest Muhammadans, Indian Christians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians. From these and other figures of a like nature he naturally, concluded that an open competition for the Civil Service in India would mean an almost complete monopoly of the service by the Brahmin caste and the practical exclusion from it of the non-Brahmin classes. Of course, he did not invite the attention of the Public Service Commission to what prevailed in the important Native States, directly under the control of the Madras Government, where too, the preponderance of Brahmins in the Government Service, then, as now, was not less marked. Nor did he go into the figures relating to the Subordinate services which are recruited under a system almost wholly of patronage. Surely, in these services, the preponderance of Brahmins would be still more striking.

With regard to what obtains at the present moment in the various branches of the Government service, it is needless to go into the figures. But we cannot help calling attention to the highest appointments open to the Indian in this Presidency and the principle upon which they are distributed. Since the Executive Council of H.E. the Governor has been opened to Indians, three Indian gentlemen have been admitted into it in succession, the two latter being Brahmin lawyers. Of the five Indian Judges of the High Court, four of them, i.e., all the Hindu Judges, are Brahmins. In 1914 a new Secretaryship to Government was created, and a Brahmin official was forthwith appointed to it. The Indian Secretary to the Board of Revenue is a Brahmin ; and of the two Collectorships open to the Members of the Provincial Civil Service, that which has fallen to the share of communities other than the Muhammadan has nearly always gone to a Brahmin official.

Public Bodies

What is true of Government Service is equally true of local and other public bodies. Where an electorate is composed of a large number of Brahmins, the non-Brahmin Indian has hardly a chance. It nearly always happens that while the non-Brahmins do not concentrate upon a single candidate, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, the Brahmins nearly always unite and support their caste-man. The Madras University of which the majority of Indian Fellows, classified under the several Indian groups, are Brahmins, has never returned a non-Brahmin Indian to the local Legislative Council, so much so that no non-Brahmin Indian, however well qualified otherwise, indulges the hope of getting elected as a Member for the University in the Legislative Council, unless it be with the support of the European Fellows. At a meeting of the Madras Legislative Council, held in November 1914, in reply to an interpellation by the late Mr. Kunhi Raman Nayanar, it was stated that the total number of registered graduates of the University was 650 of whom 452 were Brahmins, 124 non-Brahmin Hindus and 74 belonged to other communities, and that since 1907, when election of Fellows by registered Graduates began, 12 Fellows were elected of whom with one exception all were Brahmins. We are not aware that neither before 1907 when a sort of election of a few Fellows by Graduates of a certain number of years' standing was allowed, nor since 1914 when the statement referred to was made in the Legislative Council, the Graduates of the Madras University of whom the majority have always been Brahmins, elected a non-Brahmin as a Fellow of the University, so that the non-Brahmin, however distinguished, has little or no chance of getting into the Senate of the Madras University through what is called the open door of election. In the election to the Imperial and local Legislative Councils and to Municipal Bodies, one finds the same truth illustrated, so far as these elections could be controlled by the "rigidly exclusive caste". If occasionally, a fair-minded ruler endeavours to correct the inequality arising from the preponderance of Brahmins on any public body by having recourse to nominations of individuals from comparatively unrepresented interests, he is severely criticised in the Brahmin

press. How His Excellency Lord Pentland was dealt with by some of the papers in connection with the recent nominations to his Legislative Council may be cited as the latest example of this kind of hostile and unfair criticism. Outside these responsible bodies, more or less under the control of the Government, even in the case of existing political organisations in the City of Madras as well as in the Districts, the figures regarding election, if gone into, will tell the same tale. To quote one of the latest instances, of the 15 gentlemen elected from this Presidency to represent it on the All-India Congress Committee, with the exception of one solitary non-Brahmin Indian, all are practically Brahmins, and yet the decision of this Committee, which is the executive of the Congress, upon matters of grave import, such as the revision of the Indian Constitution after the War, will be held up to the world's admiring gaze as the considered opinions, among others, of the 40 millions of non-Brahmins of this large and important Province. It is our unfortunate experience also that as concessions and rights are more freely bestowed, the rigidly exclusive caste grows still more rigid and exclusive.

Non-Brahmins and Education

In defence of all this practical monopoly of political power and high Government appointments which make for that power, it is pointed out that though the Brahmins are only a small fraction of the population of this Presidency, they are far ahead of other communities in regard to university qualification. No one denies this. Old established traditions, the position of the Brahmins as the highest and the most sacred of the Hindu castes, the nature of their ancient calling, and the steady inculcation of the belief, both by written tests and oral teaching, that they are so many divinely-ordained intermediaries without whose active intervention and blessing the soul cannot obtain salvation and their consequent freedom from manual toil,—all these helped them to adapt themselves easily to the new conditions under British Rule, as under previous epochs, in larger numbers and far more successfully than the other castes and communities. Apart,

however, from the question of English education, are large material stakes, traditional and inherited interests in the soil and the social prestige that goes with it, influence among the masses, quiet and peaceful occupations that tend to the steady economic development of the Province, and overwhelming numerical strength itself, to count for nothing? Should not the classes and communities that, from time immemorial, have stood for these, receive encouragement from the Government? In the matter of education itself the advantage is not all on the side of the Brahmin caste. Though rather late in the field, the non-Brahmin communities have begun to move. They now represent various stages of progress. Some of them such as the Chetty, the Komatti, the Mudaliar, the Naidu, and the Nair, have been making rapid progress; and even the least advanced, like those who are ahead of them, are manfully exerting themselves to come up to the standard of the new time. The spirit of educational progress is abroad, and it is a significant circumstance that, among some of the non-Brahmin communities, the development is more harmonious and less one-sided than among the Brahmins. In spite of the singular solicitude which, for reasons not apparent, the Department of Education has been showing for the education of Brahmin girls and especially of Brahmin widows, as if the Brahmins were a backward class, the percentage of literates among the women of such non-Brahmin communities as the Nairs is higher than among the Brahmins. In a variety of ways and in different walks of life, the non-Brahmins will now be found unostentatiously and yet effectively contributing to the moral and material progress of this Presidency. But these and their brethren have so far been groping helpless in the background, because of the subtle and manifold ways in which political power and official influence are often exercised by the Brahmin caste.

Want of Organization

We do not deny that in these days of fierce intellectual competition, the skill to pass examinations is a valuable personal possession. But it passes our understanding why a small class, which

shows a larger percentage of English knowing men than their neighbours, should be allowed almost to absorb all the Government appointments, great and small, high and low, to the exclusion of the latter among whom may also be found, though in small proportions, men of capacity, enlightenment and culture. The fact cannot be gainsaid that, in spite of the numerous obstacles in their path, as executive and judicial officers, as educationists, lawyers, medical men, engineers, public men and as successful administrators of large and important estates, the non-Brahmin communities have produced men of distinguished attainments and unquestioned eminence, some of whom have found no equals in the Brahmin caste. Guided by their own sense of self-respect and enlightened self-interest, had they and their communities always acted in concert, even in the matter of Government appointments and political power, they would have been at the top, a place which is theirs by right. As it is, for want of efficient separate organisations of their own and of the instinct or the inclination to make the freest and the most effective use of the modern weapon of publicity, their interests have not received their proper share of attention and recognition.

Progressive Political Development Wanted and Not Unauthorised Constitution-Making :

Not satisfied with the possession of the key to the present political position, the radical politicians of this Presidency, who are apparently never so happy as when they ask for fresh political concessions, irrespective of their suitability to the existing conditions, now ask for Home Rule ; and from previous experience we fear that if a discordant note is not sounded at the proper time, it will of course be made out that all India is keen about Home Rule. It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the details of this extravagant scheme, or into those of the other submitted to His Excellency the Viceroy by nineteen members of the Imperial Legislative Council. We are not in favour of any measure which, in operation, is designed, or tends completely, to undermine the influence and authority of the British Rulers who alone, in the present circumstances of India, are able to hold

the scales even between creed and class and to develop that sense of unity and national solidarity without which India will continue to be a congeries of mutually exclusive and warring groups, without a common purpose and a common patriotism. (While we disassociate ourselves entirely from unauthorised Indian Constitution-making, which seems to be a favourite occupation with a certain class of politicians, we must say that we are strongly in favour of progressive political development of a well-defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. In the early days of the Indian National Congress, when that movement was directed and controlled on the spot, by such sagacious and thoughtful men as the late Messrs. A. O. Hume, W. C. Bannerjee, Budrudin Tyabji, S. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Rangiah Naidu, Rao Bahadur Sabapathi Mudaliar and Sir Sankaran Nair, enlightened non-Brahmins all over the Presidency gave it their hearty and loyal support. It was then, though not in form and name, but in spirit and method, a truly national institution. Some of the old ideals are still there. But the spirit in which, the method by which, and and the persons by whom, it is at present worked, cannot, all of them, commend themselves to the thinking and self-respecting section of the non-Brahmin public of this Presidency. The social reactionary and the impatient political idealist, who seldom has his foot on solid earth, have now taken almost complete possession of the Congress. Democratic in aims, an irresponsible bureaucracy now manipulates its wires. We sincerely hope that sane and sober politicians who know the country and its people, and who feel their responsibility to both, will soon reassert their mastery over the Congress machine, and direct it in strict accordance with the living realities of the present.

No Caste Rule, Please

For our part, we deprecate, as we have suggested, the introduction of changes not warranted by the present conditions. We cannot too strongly condemn caste or class rule. We are of those who think that in the truest and best interests of India, its Government should continue to be conducted on true British principles

of justice and equality of opportunity. We are deeply devoted and loyally attached to British Rule. For, that rule, in spite of its many shortcomings and occasional aberrations, is, in the main, just and sympathetic. We, indeed, hope that our rulers will, as their knowledge of the country expands, be more readily responsive to public feeling when, of course, that feeling is clearly manifest and decidedly unambiguous, and that before they take any action they will examine the interests and wishes of each caste, class and community with more anxious care than heretofore and in a less conventional manner. When the spirit of social exclusiveness and the rigidity of class and caste begin to disappear, the progress towards self-government will unquestionably be more satisfactory. But for the present, the practical politician has to concern himself with what lies immediately in front of him.

Self-Government Based on Equal Distribution of Power

After the triumphant conclusion of the war, the Indian Constitution will doubtless come before the British statesmen and British Parliament for revision. India has earned the right to demand that the basis of her constitution should be broadened and deepened, that her sons, representing every class, caste and community, according to their acknowledged position in the country and their respective numerical strength, should be given a more effective voice in the management of her affairs, that she should be given fiscal freedom and legislative autonomy in matters affecting her domestic policy and economic position, and that, lastly, she must be accorded a place in the Empire conducive to the sense of self-respect of her children as British subjects, and not inferior in dignity and power to that occupied by any self-governing Colony.

The Immediate Duty of Non-Brahmins

We appeal to the enlightened members of the non-Brahmin communities to be up and doing. Their future lies in their own hands. Great and pressing is the task with which they are confronted. They have, in the first place, to educate their boys and

girls in far larger numbers than they have yet done. Associations under the responsible guidance of leading non-Brahmin gentlemen should be started and maintained in a state of efficiency, in every populous centre, not merely to induce the various non-Brahmin communities to avail themselves more freely of the existing facilities for education, and to create such facilities where they do not now exist, but also to find adequate funds for the education of such of their poor but intelligent boys and girls as cannot obtain instruction without extraneous pecuniary help. Indeed a more vigorous educational policy for the non-Brahmins has long been overdue. Side by side with the starting of associations for the advancement of the education of the non-Brahmin classes, must also be maintained, social and political organisations, and, where they are needed, well conducted newspapers of their own, both in the vernaculars and in English, to push forward their claims. By their attitude of silence and inaction they have failed to make their voices heard, and others more astute than they have used them for their own ends, with the result that there is a great deal of discontent among the non-Brahmins about their present lot as compared with that of their Brahmin fellow countrymen, of which, perhaps, the Government is not fully aware. The discontent is growing every day, and the attention of the Government will be drawn to it. But the non-Brahmins must first help themselves. Let them do everything needful to ensure a continued educational, social, political and economical development on a broad and enduring basis ; and, then, their future as British subjects will be brighter and more prosperous than it is today. What is designated as " Nation Building " is a laborious task, involving and indeed necessitating, in the slow process of evolution, the due performance, in the proper time, by each class and community, of the duty it owes to itself, first and foremost. It is our firm conviction that in India, for some-time to come, at any rate, every community has primarily to put its own house in order, so that, when it has to co-operate with other communities, possibly with higher social pretensions, it may do so not as a dependent and helpless unit to be made a figure-head or cat's-paw of, but as a self-respecting and highly developed

social organisation, offering its willing co-operation for the promotion of common objects on terms of perfect equality.

P. Theagaraya Chetti

Non-Brahmin gentlemen desirous of joining the movement are requested to correspond with Rao Bahadur P. Theagaraya Chettiar, Tondayarpet, Madras, or with M. R. Ry. T. Ethiraja Mudaliar, B.A., B.L., High Court Vakil, Poonamallee Road, Madras.

Rules of the S.I.L.F.

(Madras Branch)

1. The name of the Association shall be "The South Indian Liberal Federation, Madras Branch. "

2. Its OBJECTS are :

- (a) The attainment of Dominion Home Rule by constitutional methods ;
- (b) Promoting a spirit of brotherhood among the Non-Brahmans, including Mussalmans, Christians and other Non-Hindu communities ;
- (c) Safe-guarding and protecting the interests of the country in general and of the Non-Brahmans in particular ;
- (d) Securing to the Non-Brahmans adequate representation in the Imperial and Provincial Assemblies and other Public Bodies and in the Public Services of the country and administration generally ;
- (e) To organise meetings, conferences, and confederations ;

(f) To disseminate by public lectures, by distribution of literature and other means, sound and liberal views in regard to public questions and thus create and direct public opinion ;

(g) For doing all acts necessary to secure the above ends.

3. The Association shall consist of (a) Patrons, (b) Life members ; and (c) Ordinary members.

4. Persons who contribute a sum of not less than Rs. 1,000-0-0 to the permanent funds of the Association shall be Patrons.

5. Life-members shall be those who contribute a sum not less than Rs. 100-0-0 to the permanent funds of the Association.

6. Ordinary members are those who pay a subscription of not less than Four Rupees to the Association per annum.

7. All persons other than Brahmins shall be eligible to become patrons or members provided they are over 21 years in age and subscribe to the objects of the Association.

8. Every application for membership shall be made on an authorised form signed by the applicant.

9. The power to admit members shall vest in the Managing committee.

10. The subscription shall be paid by the end of the first quarter of each year.

11. Any member who is in arrears of his subscription shall forfeit all privileges of membership.

12. Any member failing to pay his subscription by the end of the year shall *ipso facto* cease to be a member provided that any such member may be re-admitted on payment of all arrears due to him.

13. Save as provided in Rule 12, no member shall be removed from the Association except by a resolution passed by three-fourths of the members of the Association present and voting at an extra-ordinary meeting provided that the number of members attending the meeting is not less than half the members on the rolls.

14. A General Body meeting shall be held on the second Saturday of November in each year :

- (a) to consider the Report of the Managing committee on the working of the Association.
- (b) to consider the report of the auditor on the accounts of the Association ;
- (c) to elect the office-bearers and members of the Managing committee ; and
- (d) to consider any subject that may be brought, by any member of which not less than 10 days' notice shall have been given to the Secretaries.

15. The Managing committee may, of its own motion and shall, at the written request of not less than 25 members, convene an extraordinary meeting of the Association for considering any specified subject or subjects. But in all such cases, not less than a week's notice shall ordinarily be given to members unless the committee considers, in cases of urgency, that shorter notice is sufficient.

16. The President or in his absence any Vice-President shall preside at all meetings and in the absence of either, the members present shall elect a Chairman.

17. In all matters, the decision of the majority shall prevail and in cases of equality of votes, the President or the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

18. The Proceedings of every meeting shall be recorded in a book to be kept for the purpose by the Secretaries and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

19. The Governing Body

The Management of the Association shall vest in a committee consisting of :

- (a) The President
- (b) Ten Vice-Presidents
- (c) Three Secretaries
- (d) One Treasurer and
- (e) Twenty Ordinary members of the Association.

N.B.—The Patrons shall be Ex-Officio members of the committee.

20. The President, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurer and other members of the committee (except Patrons) shall be elected annually at the General meeting and shall generally hold office for a period of one year or until the next General meeting.

21. If any vacancy occurs among the office-bearers or in the committee between two General meetings, the Committee shall elect a member to fill up the vacancy until the next General meeting.

22. The committee shall in addition to the powers conferred on it by these Rules, have power

- (a) to purchase suitable books for the Association Library and to subscribe for newspapers ;
- (b) to print and publish books, addresses or pamphlets, leaflets.
- (c) to sanction the scale of the establishment from time to time ;

(d) to pass bye-laws not inconsistent with the rules of the Association ;

(e) generally to apply the funds of the Association in furtherance of the objects and to do all other acts relating to the work and management of the Association.

(23) The President shall have discretionary powers in all matters not specially provided for in these rules or in the bye-laws, if any, passed by the committee and such action of the President shall be brought to the notice of the committee by the Secretaries at its next meeting.

24. The committee shall have powers to employ from time to time such servants as may be required for the Association and to control, punish and dismiss them.

25. All bye-laws that may be passed by the committee shall be submitted for the approval of the General Body at its next meeting.

26. The committee shall meet once a month but special meetings of the committee may be convened by the President or on the written requisition of not less than six members of the committee for any specific purpose.

27. The quorum for all meetings of the committee shall be six.

28. The President and in his absence any of the Vice-Presidents shall preside at all meetings of the committee and in the absence of these, the members of the committee present shall elect a Chairman.

29. In all matters, the decision of the majority shall prevail and in case of equality of votes, the President or the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

30. A Minute book shall be kept by Secretaries in which the resolutions of the committee and the action thereon shall be recorded.

31. The committee shall have power to dispose of routine and unimportant matters by circulation instead of at a meeting of the committee.

Accounts

32. There shall be one fund and one account of the moneys collected and disbursed.

33. All moneys received shall be deposited in a Bank approved by the committee and no money shall be drawn except by a cheque drawn by the Treasurer and President or a Vice-President deputed for this purpose by the President.

34. The accounts of the Association shall be audited every year by a certified auditor appointed by the committee and the auditor's report shall be placed before the Association at the annual General meeting with the remarks of the committee, if any.

Membership Form of S.I.L.F.

Form A

To

The Honorary Secretary

The South Indian Liberal Federation.

Sir,

Please enlist me as a member of **THE SOUTH INDIAN LIBERAL FEDERATION** whose creed is as follows :

Members of the Liberal Federation are averse to any violent and sudden constitutional changes which will impair the authority of the British Government to which they look for holding the scales even between class and class. They are, however, strongly in favour of progressive political development, of a well defined policy of trust in the people, qualified by prudence, and of timely and liberal concessions in the wake of proved fitness. The time for the grant of complete Self-Government to India has not yet come. This is a time for preparation to attain that goal. No intermediate step that is taken with a view to reaching the final goal will be acceptable to the members of the Federation, which does not secure complete representation to the different communities that constitute the population of this Presidency in proportion to their numerical strength and stake in the country.

Yours truly,

Date : 19 .

Particulars

Name in full	:	.....
Age	:	.....
Caste or Community	:	.....
Occupation	:	.....
Residence	:	.....

The Constitution of S.I.L.F.

(As it stood in 1931)

1. The name of the association shall be **THE SOUTH INDIAN LIBERAL FEDERATION.**
★
2. The objects of South Indian Liberal Federation are :
 - (a) To obtain Swaraj for India as a component part of the British Empire at as early a date as possible by all peaceful and legitimate and constitutional means ;
 - (b) To promote goodwill and unity among the different non-Brahmin classes and communities of South India through safe-guarding their interest by means of adequate and communal representation as well as by social amelioration and reorganisation with a view to the ultimate fusion of all castes ;
 - (c) To promote the education, social economic, industrial, agricultural and political progress of all non-Brahmin communities in Southern India.
 - (d) To effectively organise public opinion and express it on all questions which are deemed by a general consent to

be of importance and to act as the authoritative and representative mouthpiece of the non-Brahmins of Southern India, and

- (e) Generally to do such acts or things as shall be deemed expedient in furtherance of the above object.

Organisation

3. The South Indian Liberal Federation shall consist of :

(a) All urban and rural non-Brahmin associations professing the principles and policies of the Federation and affiliated to it ; and

(b) The party in the Legislative Council.

Membership

4. Every non-Brahmin who is over 21 years of age and who accepts the creed of the South Indian Liberal Federation shall be eligible for membership of an urban or rural association.

The term "Non-Brahmin" shall include also Mohammedan, Indian Christians, Domiciled Anglo-Indians and Europeans.

Officers

5. There shall be a President, five Vice-Presidents, a Chairman of the Executive Committee, a General Secretary, a Chief Organiser, three Divisional Organisers, a Treasurer, two Trustees and an Auditor.

President

6. The President shall be the leader of the party and shall preside at all meetings of the South Indian Liberal Federation. In the absence of the President, one of the Vice-Presidents shall preside at such meetings.

Chairman

7. The Chief Whip of the Party in the Legislative Council shall be the Chairman of the Executive committee. He shall preside at all meetings of the Executive committee.

General Secretary

8. The General Secretary shall be the Executive Officer of the Federation, and shall act under the orders of the Executive committee. He shall conduct its correspondence and carry out its orders and resolutions, manage the committee office and deal with all administrative affairs not specifically assigned to the Chairman or other officers. The General Secretary shall be the convenor of all meetings of the Executive committee of the S.I.L.F. He shall maintain a permanent record of all proceedings both of the Executive committee and of the General meetings of the S.I.L.F. He shall maintain a register of the members of all the Branch Associations both at the Headquarters and in the District.

Chief Organiser

9. The Chief Organiser shall be responsible for the formation of local Associations all over the Presidency, and shall assist in the proper working of the same.

The Divisional Organisers

10. The Divisional Organisers will assist the Chief Organiser in the work of management in collaboration with and under the guidance of the Chief Organiser. The Presidency shall be divided into three divisions :

The first division shall consist of the districts of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Kistna, Guntur, Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur, Bellary, Nellore, Chittoor.

The second division shall consist of the districts of Chingleput, Madras, N. Arcot, S. Arcot, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Salem, Madura, Ramnad, Tinnevely, Coimbatore, and the Nilgiris.

The third division shall consist of Malabar and South Canara.

Each of this division will demand the immediate attention of the divisional organisers for the starting of district and taluq Associations.

Treasurer

11. The Treasurer shall keep the accounts of the Federation and shall be responsible for the expenditure of the moneys for duly authorised purposes.

Trustees

12. Two Trustees shall be elected by the Executive committee, who shall be responsible for the proper investment of the party funds.

Auditor

13. The Auditor shall be also elected by the Executive committee to scrutinise the accounts of the Federation and submit reports thereon to the Executive committee.

Executive Committee

14. The Executive Committee shall consist of :

- (a) The Officers of the Federation (ex-officio).
- (b) Two Representatives from each District selected by the District Association ;
- (c) Twelve members from Madras ; and
- (d) Such number of members, not exceeding sixteen, as may be co-opted by the Executive committee for the proper representation of unrepresented communities and classes, including Backward and Depressed classes.

Meetings

15. There shall be a meeting of the Executive committee once in every quarter. A meeting of the Executive committee may also be convened whenever the Chairman thinks fit or on a requisition sent by at least 10 members of the committee.

Quorum

16. The quorum for a meeting of the Executive committee shall be 15. The meetings of the committee shall be convened only after 7 days' clear notice.

Duties

17. The duties of the Executive committee shall be :

- (1) to give effect to the objects of the Federation ;
- (2) to organise and arrange for the meetings of the Federation and for the Annual Confederation ;
- (3) to carry out the resolutions passed at the meeting of the Federation and the Confederation ;
- (4) to organise elections to the Provincial and Imperial Legislative bodies.
- (5) to organise for the collection of Party Fund and
- (6) to send nominations of office-bearers to the General Body for its consideration. It shall send up panels of 4 names for each appointments.

It shall be competent for the Executive committee to delegate to one or more standing sub-committees all or any of its powers for the speedy disposal of business.

Change in the Constitution

18. The Constitution of the Federation may be amended at a meeting of the confederation. There shall be one month's

clear notice given before a meeting of the Federation is convened to consider any change in the constitution.

The S.I.L.F. Publication Department

19. There shall be a Publication Department established by and for the Federation. It shall be the business of this Department to render efficient help to the South Indian Liberal Federation and its Branches and affiliated Associations in their educational work by extending and systematising the preparation and production of political literature. The Department shall issue leaflets and pamphlets to meet the varying phases of the party politics and shall furnish all necessary information on current political questions to members of council, candidates, public speakers and others who may require it. The Publication Department shall be in charge and under the control of a committee, which shall be composed of the Chief Whip and five members elected by the Executive committee.

Party Funds

20. There shall be constituted a Party Fund, to which shall be credited all donations and subscriptions made or given by any member of the public. The Fund shall vest in two trustees who shall be responsible for the proper investment thereof. There shall be constituted a committee consisting of the President, the General Secretary, the Chief Whip, the Chief Organiser, and five members elected by the Executive committee annually, and such committee shall have the power of disposal over the Party Funds. The Party Fund shall be devoted to the following purposes :

- (1) The maintenance of Party journals.
- (2) The publication of pamphlets, leaflets, etc., by the Federation Publication Department.
- (3) The financing of paid Agents, Lecturers and Organisers to propagate the principles of the Federation and educate

the masses regarding the Party programmes and activities and to form Branch Associations.

- (4) The financing of such Party candidates as this committee may decide upon to contest elections to the legislatures. The two trustees shall be empowered to jointly sign cheques and to give receipts.

Confederation

21. There shall be held a provincial confederation once in every year.

District Associations

22. There shall be a District Branch of the South Indian Liberal Federation in each District with sub-Branches. A subscription of Rs. 4/- in one instalment per annum shall entitle any non-Brahmin subscribing to the objects of the Federation to become a member of the District Association or any of its Branches. The office of the District Federation shall be composed of a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. There shall also be an Executive committee composed of a representative from the Association at the Headquarters of the District and two representatives of every Sub-Branch in the District. The District Executive committee shall elect its officers and shall also elect two representatives to the Executive committee of the South Indian Liberal Federation. Each District Association shall contribute 10 per cent of its funds annually to the South Indian Liberal Federation. It shall be competent for the District Associations to make Rules and Regulations, Laws and Bye-Laws, not inconsistent with those of the South Indian Liberal Federation, for its own jurisdiction. In cases of dispute, the matter shall be referred to the leader for his decision.

The Party in the Legislative Council

23. The affairs of the Party in the Legislative Council shall be managed by the leader of the Party with the help and advice of the Executive committee of the Party. The Party Executive

committee in the Legislative Council shall consist of not less than one-third of the total number of M.L.Cs belonging to the Party and shall as far as possible represent various communities and interests, such as zamindars, Muhammadans, Christians, Depressed classes, Tamils, Telugus and West Coast Members. The leader and the Whips of the Party shall be ex-officio members of the Executive committee. One-third of its members shall retire by rotation every year but shall be eligible for re-election. The Whips, who are the Executive of the Party, shall be elected at the beginning of each new council and shall hold office for the period of the new council and they shall be responsible to the Party for the proper conduct of work in the Council. The Executive committee shall meet once in every month. The Ministers shall consult the Executive on all matters of Party policy and all matters affecting the interests of the Party in the councils.

Miscellaneous Rules

24. In case of equality of votes at any meeting, either of the General Body or its Committee, the President Officer shall have a second or casting vote. In the absence of a quorum, action may be taken by the President-Leader in consultation with the Chief Whip and the General Secretary. In case of emergency, the President may take any action he thinks necessary in consultation with the Chief Whip and the General Secretary, but shall inform the Executive committee thereof within 15 days therefrom. The President shall be entitled to be present at all meetings of any sub-committee of the Federation.

Social Progress Committee

25. There shall be a standing committee, called the Social Progress sub-committee, consisting of 8 members elected by the Executive committee. The Secretary of this committee shall be recommended by the Executive committee and shall be elected by the General Body along with its office-bearers. The Social Progress sub-committee shall organise ways and

means of promoting social unity and solidarity in the various sections of the non-Brahmins Community, inclusive of the Depressed and Backward Classes.

Volunteer Corps

26. There shall be Volunteer Corps under the control and direction of the South Indian Liberal Federation in each District and in the City of Madras. The General Officer in charge of the entire corps for the Presidency shall be nominated by the President. The Captains and Subordinate Officers of the District Volunteer Corps shall be nominated by the General Officer.

Proceedings of a meeting of the Executive
Committee of the Madras Deafblind
Association held on Sunday the 24 Jan 26
held at nos 146/147 Vengal Rao Mudali St
Triplicane

Present: Messrs D. Rangarajan
C. Rajaratnam
C. Kanakasabai
C. Natesan
U. Sivaprasad
B. Madhavan

Resolved that in pursuance of the
desire expressed by the President
the Honble Raja of Tanjore ^{at an interview with him by the President} the ^{the President} balance of amount now in the
hands of Mr M Ibrahim, High
Court Advocate out of the advance
of Rs 2500/- paid by him, be
accepted and the same be utilised
for the purchase of a building
for the Association

Resolved that the site in Vengal Rao
Mudali Street, Triplicane, is premises
No. , be purchased for the Association.
That the documents of title

be sent to Mr. V. Sivaprasada Murthy
& R. Madanagopal Rao for their
opinion

C. Natarajan

Chairman.

C. Kanakappa Chetty

J. J. Narasimham

R. Madanagopal

V. Sankaranarayanan

S. S. Ranganathan



A Brief Note on Select Sources

Any scholar who attempts to write the history of the Justice Party will not suffer from scarcity of materials but he will be confronting a bumper crop of source materials, which he can not easily exhaust. During the early decades of the present century, there was a mushroom growth of newspapers and periodicals both in English and vernacular languages. The bureaucratic set-up of the British Government which was characterised as a paper government adhered to the principles of red-tapism and recorded everything that happened under its nose. In consequence, a huge mass of official records in the form of governmental orders, manuals, reports and despatches got accumulated. These documents constitute one of the major primary sources for the present study. They are at present stored in the Tamil Nadu Archives. In addition, the proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council singularly forms themselves a distinct source for the history of the Justice Party.

Newspapers

The newspapers as mass media played their role in influencing the opinion of the masses and consequently the course of events. For the history of the Justice Party they are immeasurably useful.

If they are used properly it is possible for any student of history to arrive at conclusions of unbiased nature and the history of the Justice Party can emerge in its entirety.

Justice

Of all the newspapers, *Justice* is the principal source of information. It is rather unfortunate that all the issues of this paper are not available anywhere in India and many of them are missing. Their disappearance even from the portals of the libraries including the Archives of Tamil Nadu still remains mysterious. It is believed that there was an organised attempt after the debacle of the Justice Party in 1937 elections, to destroy all the records relating to it by the so-called nationalists. However, a few volumes of the back-numbers of *Justice* relating to the period from 1930 to 1937, with a few issues missing in between are still available in the University Library, Madras. Surprisingly, the back-issues of *Justice* for the period from 1917 to 1927 are found in the form of paper clippings in the private papers of eminent Justicites of the period. Further, a few volumes of editorials of *Justice*, though scattered are treasured up in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Notwithstanding the fact that the issues of this daily are not found in an unbroken series some of the supplementary issues published in the 30s provide us adequate information about the history of Justice Party in its embryonic stage. For instance, *Justice, Commemoration Day Supplement* of 26th February 1931 gives us not only the biographical sketches of the trio—Dr. T. M. Nair, P. Theagaraya Chetti and the Rajah of Panagal—but also supplies us information about the various Annual Confederations organised by the Party from 1917 to 1929 including those of All India Non-Brahmin Congresses held at Belgaum and Amraoti. Similarly, *Dr. T. M. Nair's Day Special Supplement* of *Justice* published on 17th July 1935 throws abundant light on the activities of Dr. T. M. Nair as the progenitor of the Dravidian movement. Another work, *The Mirror of the Year*, a collection of the editorials written by A. R. Mudaliar, is a book of unique importance. Indeed this book helps us enormously understand the attitude and the role of

the Justice Party as a responsible opposition in the Legislative Council of Madras after its defeat in 1926 elections. Besides pamphlets like *Justice Movement* by A. P. Patro, *A Short Sketch of the Life of Dr. T. M. Nair* by N. Gopala Menon as well as by S. A. Somasundaram Pillai, detailed life profiles of *Sir K. V. Reddi Naidu and His Times* by G. V. Subba Rao and of *Bobbili* by Nilkan Perumal and *South Indian Celebrities*, Volumes I and II by K. M. Balasubramanian also supply us very valuable materials to construct the history of Justice Party. *Justice Party Golden Jubilee Souvenir* 1968 and *P. T. Rajan's Eighty-Second Birthday Souvenir* 1973 are a compendium of essays and speeches which spotlight the ideals and objectives of the Justice Party. in a more detailed manner. Similarly *The Justice Year Book* 1929 edited by T. A. V. Nathan is a repository of information despite the fact that it deals with the events of that particular year. Lastly, it is relevant to mention that a small booklet on the *History of the Justice Party* written by Muthuswami Pillai in Tamil, gives a narrative account of the Party from 1916 to 1938. Though it is sketchy, the information that it furnishes is very useful. Similarly *Justice Movement* 1917 by T. Varadarajulu Naidu is a valuable compilation giving a detailed account of the activities of the Justice Party in 1917, the first year of its existence. It is truly a treasure house of information for the early history of the Justice Party. In the absence of back-numbers of *Justice* for the initial years of the Party, this work provides an interesting epilogue to its history. A recent work in Tamil entitled *Sir P. Theagarayar Muthal Dr. Kalaignar Varai, (From Sir Theagarayar to Dr. Kalaignar)* by N. S. Elango furnishes some useful information on the subject.

Private Papers

Of the non-official records, private papers of renowned Indians and eminent British administrators constitute a conspicuous part of the source materials. Notable Indians of those days had recorded certain remarkable contemporary events either in their diaries or in their correspondence with others. The private papers of V. Krishnaswamy Aiyar, P. S. Sivaswamy

Aiyar, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, K. Santhanam are in the National Archives, New Delhi. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, which has become quite recently a centre of attraction for research scholars, possesses a good number of personal papers. Among them, those of S. Satyamoorthy, C. R. Reddy, M. C. Raja, A. P. Patro, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy and P. Kesava Pillai are notable. The personal papers of former Viceroy, Secretaries of State, Governors and senior public servants were acquired in the form of microfilms from abroad. Among the private papers, those of Curzon, Minto, Morley, Pentland, Montagu, Willingdon, Erskine and Linlithgow are greatly useful for writing this volume. The personal papers of Lord Erskine, who was the Governor of Madras, from 1934 to 1940 need a special mention here. They speak much of the activities of the Justice Party and succinctly bring out the conflict that ensued between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the Madras Presidency. Besides, the personal papers of K. V. Reddi Naidu, which are stocked in the library of the Andhra University, Waltair, are a dependable source for the events of the formative days of the Justice Party more particularly on its deputation to London.

The Diary of A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar

The diary maintained by A. Ramaswami Mudaliar for the period between June and November 1919 is a worthy document providing us with most confidential and first-hand information regarding the Justice Party's deputation to London. It eloquently presents a grand picture of what the Justice Party deputationists did in London to mobilise support for their cause. The diplomacy and the tactics adopted by the deputationists are very well portrayed in the pages of this diary.

The Minutes Book of the S.I.L.F. of the Madras City Branch

A rare and unique source for the present study is the Minutes book of the S.I.L.F. of the Madras City branch, which was in the possession of W. S. Krishnaswami Nayudu, a retired Judge of the Madras High Court. It is from this document information

regarding the meetings held under the auspices of the S.I.L.F. of the Madras City branch and the resolutions adopted there from 4th December 1921 to 29th August 1934 are gathered. It gives us glimpses of events which took place during the period between 1921 and 1934. This valuable document remained for a long time as a sealed book till I was permitted to consult it.

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"History with its flickering lamp stumbles along with trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes and kindle with pale gleams the passions of the former days." Dr. P. Rajaraman has done his best in achieving the Churchillian ideal which past history should perform; in my view the Professor has clearly defined events and vignettes with impeccable and unassailable authority. He impressed "general truths (of the Justice Party) on the mind by vivid representation of particular characters and incidents" from 1916 to 1937. He has done extensive research; every statement that has been mentioned here has been buttressed up by competent treatise, text-book, opinion or memorandum. I commend this scholarly work to all lovers of South Indian history for their study and perusal.

—Justice K. N. MUDALIYAR,
Former Law Minister, Govt. of Tamil Nadu

Dr. P. Rajaraman's book, *The Justice Party—A Historical Perspective 1916-37* which resuscitates the history of the early phase of the Non-Brahmin movement in Madras Presidency, easily stands comparison to world classics like *The Revolt of the Masses* of Jose Ortega Y. Gasset. This scholar through this outstanding work adds a new dimension to contemporary history of Tamil Nadu.

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